

Iran assails Azerbaijan for allowing American 'interference' in Caspian

MOSCOW (AFP) — Iran accused Azerbaijan on Saturday of allowing U.S. interference in the oil-rich Caspian Sea region, saying Baku's projects with Western oil companies were an historic mistake, the Iranian news agency reported.

Iranian Parliamentary Speaker Ali Akbar Nategh Nuri, on a visit to Moscow, said Azerbaijan President Geidar Aliyev was "committing an historic mistake by laying the basis for American interference" in the affairs of countries bordering on the Caspian.

"It is an historic dream of the United States to gain a solid foothold in the Caspian sea after the Gulf," Mr. Nuri told reporters.

"Superpowers always use local factors to penetrate into one region or another," Iran and Russia both oppose unilateral exploitation of the Caspian's rich oil resources.

Iran sharply criticised a multi-billion-dollar deal between Azerbaijan and a Western consortium to develop Caspian oil, after it was excluded from the project under U.S. pressure.

British Petroleum and AMOCO hold the largest stakes in the \$7.5-billion international project signed in September 1994 to develop three Azerbaijani offshore fields — Azeri, Chirag and Gynechli.

The consortium involved in the project — dubbed "the contract of the century" — also includes the Azerbaijani state oil company Socar, Turkish company TPAO and Lukoil of Russia.

Azerbaijan has also signed other major Caspian oil contracts with Western companies.

In Baku, President Aliyev told managers of AMOCO that the next century "will be a century of cooperation between Azerbaijan and U.S. companies, especially

Nuri rejects criticism of arms deals with Russia

MOSCOW (AFP) — Iran said Saturday it needed to rebuild its armed forces and rejected Western charges that its military cooperation with Russia was upsetting the military balance in the Gulf region.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Akbar Nategh Nuri, quoted by Interfax News Agency, said Iran had lost large quantities of military equipment during the 1980-1988 war against Iraq, and other weapons were now obsolete.

"The West is afraid that weapon deliveries will further strengthen Iran's independence," he told reporters during a visit to Moscow.

But he stressed that Saudi Arabia, with a population of only a sixth of the size of Iran's, had a military budget 10 times greater.

Mr. Nuri and Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov signed a joint memorandum on export controls, including a pledge to abide by international rules aimed at preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, Iran-Tass news agency reported.

Washington has voiced concern that the transfer of Russian nuclear technology to Iran could help it to build atomic weapons — a charge dismissed by Moscow.

Russia insists that the equipment it is supplying for an Iranian nuclear power station at Bushehr on the Gulf coast can only be used for civilian purposes.

Russia has delivered three diesel-powered Kilo-class submarines to Iran, and last month Israeli officials said Russia was considering supplying Iran with the technological know-how to build SS-4 surface-to-surface missiles.

The SS-4 missile has a range of 1,600 kilometres, more than double the distance of the Scud-C missiles the Iranians currently possess.

"We have many areas of cooperation (with Russia)," Mr. Nuri said, noting that Iran was buying oil equipment from Russia, and building Russian TU-334 passenger planes under licence.

AMOCO, the Azerbaijani news agency Turan reported Saturday.

Praising AMOCO's role in the contract, Mr. Aliyev said Azerbaijan would create all the necessary conditions for AMOCO to develop its operations.

The last treaties on the Caspian were signed between Iran and the former Soviet Union in 1921 and 1940, and Mr. Nuri said Iran wanted an agreement "as soon as possible" on the sea's status.

Moscow has warned that it will retaliate if the huge bounty of oil in the landlocked Caspian is claimed unilaterally by one of the other four countries border-

ing it.

But so far Moscow has not blocked the big deals, provided Lukoil has been given access.

Mr. Nuri said the positions of Iran, Russia and Turkmenistan were "very close" on the status issue, and they were trying to coordinate their approach with Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

"It's not easy to do this, because foreign intrigues are hampering us," he added.

He said he had proposed that Russia participate in Iranian oil projects, notably in the southern Pars oil-

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Iran confirms journalist found dead, cites robbery as motive for murder

TEHRAN (AFP) — An Iranian journalist found dead here in late February was killed by thieves, the government daily Iran said Saturday.

Ibrahim Zal Zadeh, the editor of the literary monthly Me'yar and owner of the publishing house Ebtakar (initiative), was killed after being robbed, it said, adding that he was carrying the equivalent of \$1,000 at the time of the murder.

"Primary investigations show several thieves were

in pursuit of the journalist," the paper said. "The killers knew well that he had money with him."

It said Zal-Zadeh, 50, was kidnapped on Feb. 22 while out buying flowers for his wife.

The Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontières said last week the journalist had been arrested a month ago by the secret service, and that he had been found murdered on March 29 near Tehran.

It said the body was found half-buried in the

outskirts of Tehran, accusing the Iranian secret service of the murder.

His press card was found in a package containing dried flowers in the back of his car, said the pro-freedom of press organisation in a protest letter to Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

The organisation urged Mr. Rafsanjani to use his influence to launch a legal inquiry and demanded that all those responsible be put on trial.



HEBRON CLASHES: Israeli soldiers scan the rooftops of Hebron houses on Saturday in search of Palestinian stone-throwers amidst clashes in the West Bank city (Reuters photo)

26 more killed in Algerian violence

HAOUACHE GROS, Algeria (Agencies) — Four people were killed in a car bomb blast in this town, sited around 35 kilometres south of the capital Algiers, local people said Saturday.

The blast occurred Friday afternoon, they told AFP, as the car was driving past the base of a local defence unit. The driver and three other people from the town were killed.

Earlier Saturday, security forces said 22 civilians were killed overnight in the nearby town of Douar Menaa. No other details were given.

They blamed the attack on anti-government extremists who have been fighting the military-backed regime since the cancellation of general elections in January 1992 which the now-banned fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) had been poised to win.

A statement read on state-run radio said the 22 were "assassinated in a cowardly way," the official term used for rebels committing murders by cutting throats.

It said the massacre occurred overnight in the Menna bamlet, near Bouafrik, 30 kilometres south of Algiers. The broadcast blamed guerrillas for the killings but gave no further details.

The killing brought to about 140 the number of people slaughtered in a wave of renewed massacres during the past week.

Over the past seven days, guerrillas have massacred nearly 120 people, mostly villagers in remote areas, killing some with chainsaws, dousing others in burning petrol or shooting them dead at point blank range in several regions across the country, according to Algerian newspapers.

In the worst attack in five years of violence in Algeria, rebels exterminated all 52 inhabitants of a village in the Medea province, 70 kilometres south of Algiers, last week.

Algeria is gearing up for June 5 legislative elections in which more than 30 political parties will take part. The outlawed FIS called on Algerians to boycott the poll which it said would be neither free nor fair.

Belgium reports seizing weapons cache

A Brussels magistrate seized 8,500 automatic weapons that were due to be shipped to Algerian guerrillas at the end of last year, the Belgian newspaper La Dernière Heure reported on Saturday.

The rifles had been imported to Belgium from Britain and were officially destined for Yemen, it said. However, Belgian security services determined that they were actually on their way to Algeria's Armed Islamic Group (GIA) via Gibraltar, it said.

The paper said an arms dealer from Liege had been imprisoned for three months in the affair.

Brussels judicial officials were not immediately available to confirm the report.

Taleban lose two key towns to rival groups

ISLAMABAD (R) — An Afghan group ousted from power in eastern Afghanistan last year said on Saturday it had captured two districts in the eastern province Kunar from the dominant Taleban movement.

But a Taleban spokesman, quoted by a Pakistan-based Afghan news service, denied the report of the capture of Asmar and Dangan districts and said heavy fighting was raging there with Taleban reinforcements sent to the area.

The Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) quoted sources in the former eastern Shura, or council, as saying the Shura forces were now controlling both districts in Kunar, which borders Pakistan, and had repulsed Taleban counter-attacks.

The Taleban ousted the pro-Shura administrations in the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman in a sweep in September last

year that later took the purist Islamist militia to take control of the capital Kabul.

A Taleban force launched an attack on opposition forces in Asmar on Saturday and both sides were using heavy weapons, AIP quoted its sources in the area as saying.

Taleban sources said the Islamist militia had also crushed recent opposition revolts in Nangarhar and Laghman provinces and had taken some 300 opposition prisoners in the past one week, AIP said. The Taleban killed 23 opposition fighters and lost at least 13 of its own men.

AIP also reported sporadic fighting in the northwestern province of Badkhis, where Taleban, which controls more than two-thirds of Afghanistan, said earlier this week that it had taken some territory from the forces of northern Uzbek Chief General Abdul Rashid Dostum.

UAE plans further cuts in foreigners

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is considering reducing its foreign community even though it expelled nearly 200,000 illegal Asian migrants in 1996, its minister of interior said on Saturday.

Mohammad Al Badi said the country was planning to draw up a strategy to increase the number of native workers and ease reliance on foreign labour.

"Tackling the imbalance in demographic structure has become a national objective, which should be shouldered by all government and non-government institutions," he told the local daily Al Itihad.

"Any measures by the

Interior Ministry in this regard must be within the framework of an overall demographic policy aimed at achieving a balance in the population to an acceptable security level."

UAE nationals are a minority in the UAE, accounting for nearly a third of its 2.37 million people. Expatriates from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other south Asian countries exceed half the total population.

Nearly 200,000 illegal migrants from south Asia flew home last year, taking advantage of an unprecedented four-month amnesty.

Like other oil-rich Gulf states, the UAE depends

heavily on expatriate workers, who began to stream in when oil was discovered three decades ago — turning the country into one of the wealthiest in the world.

"The imbalance in the demographic structure is now a priority for the UAE given its negative effects on security, economy and society," Mr. Badi said.

"But such a problem has many dimensions. We can face it only through an effective policy, including encouraging nationalisation of jobs."

Mr. Badi said a committee created by the cabinet last year to find solutions to the problem was considering more measures but he did not elaborate.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 ...Cartoon — Jonny Quest
14:30 Cartoon — Problem Child
15:00 ...French Programmes
16:00 ...Doc. — Global Family
16:25 ...Energy Express
16:50 Doc. — Our World, Their World
17:15 ...Clear Water-Big Fish
18:00 ...French Programmes
19:30 ...News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
20:00 ...Doc. — World Echo
20:30 Medical Drama — Side Effects
21:10 ...Doc. — Nautilus
22:00 ...News in English
23:25 ...Hot Shots
23:15 ...Sisters

PRAYER TIMES

04:55 ...Fajr
06:05 ... (Sunrise) Duha
12:36 ...Dhuhr
16:12 ...Asr
19:07 ...Maghreb
20:27 ...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Anglican Church Tel. 652826.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel.

771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel.

775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Amman International Church

Tel. 827126

Evangelical Lutheran Church

Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel.

654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel.

675691.

The Evangelical Local Church

in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking

Latin Catholics Parish Tel.

614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Khamasini weather conditions will prevail with temperatures rising significantly. It will be warm, dry, dusty, and winds southeasterly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be relatively warm and dusty, winds southerly moderate to active, and seas rough.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman.....10/27

Aqaba.....15/31

Deserts.....08/29

Jordan Valley.....14/30

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 17, Aqaba 25 Humidity

readings: Amman 24 per cent,

Aqaba 28 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Mazen Nballi.....830435

Dr. Fayed Dabbas.....759155

Dr. Adnan Zaghloul.....898140

Dr. Fakher Bilhel.....552233

Firas pharmacy.....661912

Ferdows pharmacy.....778336

Al Asema pharmacy.....637055

Nairoukh pharmacy.....623672

Al Salam pharmacy.....636730

Yacoub pharmacy.....644945

Shmeisani pharmacy.....637660

Najib pharmacy.....847623

IRBID:

Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir.....276852

Al Quds pharmacy.....(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Mazen Al Safarini.....985832

Khalifeh pharmacy.....985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre.....637111

Civil Defence Department.....661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue

630341

Civil Defence Emergency.....199

Rescue Police.....192 621111, 637777

Fire Brigade.....617101

Blood Bank.....775121

Highway Police.....843402

Traffic Police.....896390

Public Security Dept.....630321

Hotel Complaints.....605800

Pace Complaints.....661176

Water & Sewage Complaints.....897467

Amman Municipality Complaints

787111

Telephone Information (directory

assistance).....121

Overseas Calls.....010230

Central Amman Telephone

Repairs.....623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs.....661101

Jordan Television.....773111

Radio Jordan.....774111

Water Authority.....680100

J. Electricity Authority.....815615

Electric Power Co.....636381

RJ Flight Information.....08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre.....813813/352

Khalidi Maternity.....644281/6

Akshah Maternity.....642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity.....642362

Malhas, J. Amman.....636140

Palestine, Shmeisani.....607071

Shmeisani Hospital.....669131

University Hospital.....845845

Al-Muasher Hospital.....667227/9

The Islamic, Abdali.....666126/57

Al-Ahli, Abdali.....664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen.....777101/3

Al-Bashir.....775111/26

Army, Marka.....891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital.....602240/50

Amal Hospital.....674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and

Special Surgery.....865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital

(09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital

(09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital.....(09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital

(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital

(02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital

(02)272275

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital

(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital

(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA

INTERNATIONAL

AIRPORT

This information is supplied by

Royal Jordanian (RJ) information

department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5,

where it should always be verified.

Information on other flights can be

supplied

Crown Prince urges investment in human resources for peace

Visiting U.S. delegation explores trade, tourism with Kingdom

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan Saturday described investment in human resources development as constituting the best impetus to build peace in the Middle East.

Addressing a visiting American economic and trade delegation from the state of Wisconsin, led by that state's governor, Tommy Tomson, at a luncheon hosted in their honour, Prince Hassan called on the United States to deal with the Middle East as an integrated unit and within the framework of the global economy.

The Prince emphasised the need to attain a balance in economic and trade relations between the Middle East, Europe and the United States.

Prince Hassan also stressed that the future of Palestinian refugees must be addressed humanely.

He added that the region should enjoy a comprehensive peace covering social, humanitarian and economic domains.

Prince Hassan described as unfortunate that while the countries of the region have spent \$300 billion on arms since the Gulf war, only \$35 billion is needed to restructure and rehabilitate the Middle East and North Africa.

Jordan offers lucrative investment opportunities to entrepreneurs, especially in tourism and trade, he added.

The Crown Prince specifically referred to the Jordan Rift Valley, stating that it holds a great potential for investment.

He declared that the region has no alternative but to embark on cooperation in achieving socio-economic development and in building a better and more secure future.

Mr. Tomson told Prince Hassan that his delegation was exploring opportunities for investment and promoting U.S.-Jordanian trade links. Present at the lunch were ministers of foreign affairs, administrative development, health and medical care, industry and trade, and social development.

Earlier Saturday, Jordanian officials briefed the visiting U.S. delegation on the investment climate in Jordan, the national economy and the Kingdom's economic and trade ties with the United States.

Subsequent to a meeting with Chief of the Jordanian Exports Development and Commercial Centres Corporation (JEDCO) Mohammad Halaqa, Wisconsin Governor Tommy Tomson, head of the visiting delegation, said that his delegation is exploring prospects for opening trade with Jordan.

"We are exploring opportunities for investments in Jordan as well as developing business relations and securing agents for Wisconsin-based businesses in the Kingdom," Mr. Tomson said.

"We hope to establish trade relations with Jordan as this is the main purpose of our visit to this country," he added. "We have much to offer each other and we are optimistic about future business with the Jordanian business community."

Dr. Halaqa outlined Jordanian achievements since the economic restructuring programme in 1989, stating that Jordan, which is integrating with the global economy, will shortly conclude a partnership agreement with the European Union (EU) and is negotiating entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

He highlighted the role of the private sector and the Kingdom's current privatisation programme.

Dr. Halaqa explained that the Kingdom's products now reach 100 countries and that the volume of its exports is worth an annual \$2 billion with only \$20 million worth of Jordanian goods reaching the U.S. markets in exchange for the importation of \$421 million worth of American products annually.

Mr. Tomson and his party also met with the Chairman of the Amman Chamber of Commerce Haidar Murad who outlined foreign investments in Jordan.

Mr. Murad mentioned obstacles blocking Jordan's trade with Palestine caused by the closure of the Palestinian territories as well as Israeli settlement programmes which, he said, trigger tension and violence which prevent trade links.

He asserted that the United States as the main sponsor of the peace process is obliged to force Israel to halt its present policies which, he said, are ruining chances for peace and stability in the Middle East.

Also addressing the American visitors was Chairman of the Amman Chamber of Industry Khalid Abu Hassan, who reviewed the performance of the industrial sector and its role in the Jordanian national economy.

Mr. Abu Hassan affirmed that Iraq is the main market for Jordanian products and that the embargo on that country was severely deleterious to the Jordanian economy.

Mr. Tomson stated that the Wisconsin entrepreneurs believe they can help promote tourism in Jordan.

Premier briefs Cabinet meeting on King's talks in Washington

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdal Salam Majali Saturday chaired a regular Cabinet meeting and reported on the outcome of His Majesty King Hussein's visit to the United States as well as talks with President Bill Clinton and senior U.S. administration officials.

He said that talks covered regional developments and the peace process as well as international issues of common concern to the United States and Jordan.

According to a Cabinet statement, the prime minister also reported on King Hussein's meeting with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, Arab ambassadors to the United Nations and editors of various U.S. newspapers.

The Cabinet named Jordan's delegation to next week's Mediterranean countries meeting in Malta to discuss the peace process and named Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh to lead the delegation as well as another

delegation to be headed by Minister of Labour Saleh Khasawneh to participate in the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference to be held in Geneva towards the end of May.

The Cabinet formed another delegation from the Ministry of Transport to visit Israel in order to discuss the construction of the joint airport in Aqaba as well as a second delegation from the Ministry of Youth to visit China for talks on bilateral cooperation in youth affairs.

Minister of Finance Suleiman Hafez also addressed the ministers regarding the Jaber border post on the Jordanian-Syrian border.

Mr. Hafez inspected new facilities there last week and detailed possible improvements which might better serve travellers and their vehicles.

The Cabinet approved a memorandum of understanding as well as a draft



Prime Minister Abdal Salam Majali Saturday meets with Abdul Wahab Darawsheh, Arab member of the Israeli parliament (Petra photo)

agreement between Jordan and the U.N. for the establishment of an academy in Jordan.

A statement from the Prime Ministry also affirmed that Dr. Majali received Abdul Wahab Darawsheh in his office Saturday to review the developments in the occupied Pales-

tinian territories.

Mr. Darawsheh is a leading Arab member of the Israeli parliament.

Dr. Majali reiterated Jordan's full support for the Palestinians as well as the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

In a statement released subsequent to the meeting,

Mr. Darawsheh stated that the Arab members of the Israeli parliament unanimously oppose the Israeli government's settlement plans.

He demanded that the Israeli government commit itself to the implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords.

Prime minister asserts 'Dakamseh will receive fair trial'

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdal Salam Majali Saturday asserted that Ahmad Musa Dakamseh, the Jordanian soldier who shot and killed seven Israeli school girls last month, will receive a fair trial.

"If he is found guilty of committing this crime, he will be punished; and if he is innocent, he will be acquitted," Dr. Majali told reporters during a press

conference held at the Prime Ministry.

Corporal Dakamseh was arrested on March 13, shortly after spraying Israeli schoolgirls with gunfire from both his and another soldier's rifle, killing seven and injuring five, including a teacher.

In his first press conference since resuming office, the prime minister stated that what happened in Baqoura "will not be the first or last incident of its kind in Jordan or any other country, and there are

precedents."

Dr. Majali also told reporters that Cpl. Dakamseh's case will be transferred to the military court soon.

Cpl. Dakamseh told a three-member military committee that he had not planned the attack and that further there were no accomplices to his action.

In his confession, the soldier maintained that he committed the shooting out of a sense of national duty and to protect his military honour and national dignity.

ty," alleging that the Israeli girls "had provoked him by their loud laughter at seeing him performing his prayers."

He further stated that one of the girls attempted to take his picture while he was praying.

Cpl. Dakamseh's Defence Attorney Ahmad Najdawi stated last week that a military panel was expected to conclude the charge list later this month and indicated that the trial of the soldier might start then.

In an interview with the press last week, Cpl. Dakamseh's mother pleaded for a fair trial for her son and called on the government to ease a month-long blockade on their village in the Jordan Valley.

The Dakamseh tribe sent a cable to His Majesty King Hussein on Friday, pledging their allegiance to the Hashemite leadership and expressing their absolute confidence in the military judicial system.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Jammo receives Germans

AMMAN (Petra) — Acting Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Abdul Baqi Jammo Saturday received a German parliamentary delegation headed by Hans Wagner. Mr. Jammo told the delegation that Jordan appreciates German support and that the Kingdom is exerting efforts to reach a comprehensive, just and durable peace in the region for the next generations. Mr. Wagner lauded Jordanian-German relations. The delegation also visited the National Centre for Human Resource Development and were briefed on programmes aimed at improving instruction at Jordanian universities.

Police thwart smugglers

AMMAN (Petra) — The Badia and Border Police Saturday thwarted a smuggling attempt of 5,904 cartons of cigarettes. Head of the Badia and Border Police Department Taher Al Fawwaz maintained that the Badia police are increasing border patrols in order to foil such smuggling attempts.

Two pilgrims die in Mecca

MECCA (Petra) — Two Jordanian pilgrims were reported to have died here Saturday. Ahmad Abdullah Hamdan, from Jerash, died in a car accident while Aliya Mohammad, from Irbid, died of a heart attack.

Pan-Arab ophthalmology council to convene fourth international conference in Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Pan-Arab Council of Ophthalmology is holding its fourth international conference from May 5 to 8 with nearly 800 participants from 61 nations attending.

Secretary of the Jordanian Ophthalmological Society (JOS) Dr. Jamil Nasser who is also head of the executive committee preparing for the conference, told the Jordan Times that the meetings, to be held at the Royal Cultural Centre in Amman, will be one of the largest scientific events ever to be held in the Kingdom.

The JOS is co-sponsoring the conference in conjunction with the Afro-Arab Ophthalmological Society.

During the four-day meetings, nearly 200 reports covering eye treatment specialisations will be reviewed by the delegates, Dr. Nasser said.

He added that 50 lecturers from western nations are slated to address the delegates.

Conference to include workshops

The conference, to be opened by HRH Prince Raad Ben Zeid, will include several workshops and practical sessions on eye treatment involving leading ophthalmologists, according to Dr. Nasser.

At least 110 registered members of the JOS are expected to participate in the meetings, he maintained. The society is organising a major exhibition, auxiliary to the conference, expected to be the largest yet in Jordan, displaying modern ophthalmological equipment.

Arab League official meets with minister of foreign affairs

AMMAN (Petra) — Assistant Arab League Secretary General for Palestinian Affairs Said Kamal Saturday conferred with Minister of Foreign Affairs Fayez Tarawneh in Amman.

The two discussed regional developments as well as the upcoming meeting between European and Arab countries in Malta later this month.

They also covered the Arab League's role in unifying the Arab World's stand in regards to Palestine and Israeli actions in the occupied territories.

Also Saturday, Mr. Kamal met with Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi and the two discussed relations between the Arab League and

Jordan as well as Palestine in the light of developments in the occupied Arab territories.

Arab League secretary reviews pan-Arab affairs

Last week, Mr. Kamal met with Prime Minister Abdal Salam Majali and was received by HRH Crown Prince Hassan to review pan-Arab affairs.

Also discussed were current difficulties in the way of the peace process as well as coordination among Arab countries in light of recent Israeli moves.



HRH PRINCESS RANIA DISTRIBUTES IN-KIND ASSISTANCE: Princess Rania Al Abdullah on Saturday distributes in-kind assistance to indigent families in the Irbid and Jerash governorates on the occasion of Eid Al Adha which falls on April 17 (Petra photo)

What's Going On

OPEN DISCUSSION

* Open discussion with Architectural Photographer Said Nuseibeh at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Exhibition of frescoes of Jordanian mosaics and Fayum portraits by Dorothy Mango at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre, Jabal Amman, Second Circle (Tel. 647858), until May 15.

* Display of products, for adults and children in celebration of Eid Al Adha, by Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) at the NHF premises, off Wadi Sagra (Tel. 699141/2), until April 16.

* Exhibition by the San Francisco-based Palestinian-American architectural photographer Said Nuseibeh entitled "The Farthest Mosque," at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 8. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

* Paintings by Vian Shamounki at the Jordan Plastic Art Association, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 25 (Tel. 623297).

* Paintings by Yassin Al Mohammadani at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 681303/4), until April 28.

* Paintings by Patricia Châtelain at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 27.

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Defiant Mobutu rejects Zaire rebel deadline

KINSHASA (R) — Zaire's ailing President Mobutu Sese Seko, looking in better health than on previous public outings, on Saturday defiantly rejected a rebel deadline for him to quit and said he had no plans to go into exile.

But the veteran president, speaking during an appearance with his new emergency rule prime minister, did not rule out direct talks with rebel leader Laurent Kabila — although he added that Kabila should ask him politely.

"If he asks me politely I cannot refuse to talk to a compatriot but (for him) to be in Goma (rebel headquarters in east Zaire) and say I give him three days, it's not my style or nature. I cannot reply," the veteran president told reporters.

"This kind of joke will backfire... I am head of state," he said, commenting on the deadline. "My country is Zaire and I don't know of anyone who has proposed my exile," he added.

Kabila's rebels, who took up arms in October, control half of the sprawling and potentially rich Central African nation, including its economic heartland with its

diamond, copper, cobalt and gold mines.

Mobutu, 66, rejected calls from his one-time western allies to stand down.

"I am not a colony of the westerners... it's because of copper, cobalt, gold and diamonds that they are in the process of arming Kabila. It's not because they like Zaire," he said.

Mobutu, who had prostate cancer surgery in Europe in August, said his opponents had taken advantage of his illness to try to topple him.

"All that has happened was because I was ill. I was on my sick bed when the affair started so I was stabbed in the back," he added.

He dismissed suggestions that the rebels, who captured Zaire's second city of Lubumbashi in the south on Wednesday and Thursday, were 300 kilometres from the capital Kinshasa.

"You gobble everything that he (Kabila) says. He can say this evening that he is at Mobutu's gates and you will say he is already in front of Mobutu's gates," he told journalists.

Mobutu, who seized power in 1965, declared a nationwide state of emergency on Tuesday and



Rebel soldiers on Saturday march out of the Lido barracks to patrol the rebel-held city of Lubumbashi. Zairean rebels said Saturday President Mobutu Sese Seko had 24 hours to resign or go into exile before they renewed their military campaign. Rebels were just 300 kilometres away from the capital Kinshasa, said radio Voice of the People broadcast from the eastern town of Goma, rebel headquarters (Reuters photo)

named General Likulia Bolongo as prime minister, shunting aside his veteran opposition foe Etienne

Tshisekedi, who had been in the job less than a week. Mobutu was speaking at his Camp Tshu-Tshu official

residence after talks with Likulia, who has named a 28-member government with a general close to

Mobutu in the key post of interior minister and responsible for national reconciliation.

Clerics demand stoning of Ershad for adultery

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Twenty-three Islamic clerics Saturday demanded that former President Hussain Muhammad Ershad and his mistress be executed by public stoning for adultery.

"According to the Islamic way of life, a person has to be publicly stoned to death for committing adultery," the clerics said in a joint statement published in Dhaka's newspapers.

They said Ershad, 67, can't escape the punishment because "he himself has admitted that he is having love affairs with Zeenat Mosharraf for the past 14 years."

The statement was considered important because some of the clerics control important mosques in the capital. No one has officially received such a punishment, although clerics often have enforced their orders to flog women they consider violators.

Though Bangladesh civil code does not recognize sharia, the Islamic religious law, the demand comes as another blow to Ershad's scandal-tainted political career.

In an interview with the Associated Press Ershad said Thursday his love for his mistress will remain "until the last moment of my life" but that he was ending his liaison "for the sake of the party and national politics."

In a bid to quell a revolt that his love affair caused inside his Jatiya Party, Ershad Friday removed Mrs. Mosharraf from the party's highest policy making body, the presidium, but kept her as the head of the party's women's wing.

Nazim Rahman, a Jatiya spokesman, said Mrs. Mosharraf had left the presidium "to protect the organization's image."

Talking to the AP, Ershad was in tears when he spoke about his mistress. "While she used to visit me in jail I once told her 'if I die you must come to my grave with a red rose each morning,'" he said. Ershad, a former army general, seized power in a bloodless military coup in 1982 and ruled Bangladesh for eight years until he was ousted by a pro-democracy movement. He was jailed in 1990 for corruption and abusing his office, but was elected to parliament twice while he was in prison.

Muslims cancel religious celebrations in Rangoon

RANGOON (AFP) — Muslim community leaders in Rangoon are cancelling the ritual slaughter of livestock at an upcoming religious festival, following recent religious unrest in the city, informed sources said Saturday.

Community leaders have also decided to reschedule the festival, known as Bakri Eid, so it would

not coincide with Buddhist celebrations for Burmese new year's day on April 17. It will now be held on April 19.

The Muslim festivities are a potential source of resentment among the Buddhist community, which traditionally marks new year's day with a symbolic release of fish and birds, the sources said.

The decision comes

despite assurances from city authorities that traditional Muslim celebrations and communal feasts could go ahead, although with some restrictions, following anti-Muslim unrest last month around the country, when mosques and Muslim property were attacked by monks.

The City News, an evening newsheet issued

by the office of the city mayor, announced Friday that Muslims would be forbidden from slaughtering livestock at their homes in Rangoon municipality and displaying it in the streets.

It designated a village outside the city where they could purchase livestock for the festival. Culling could only be done at a government slaughter-

house which would be open for the occasion, the city news said.

It was believed that Muslim leaders are stopping traditional celebrations as a form of protest about the attacks in March on mosques and Muslim property, which began in Mandalay and then spread to other cities and towns.

Computer problem will cost Britain \$50 billion to fix

LONDON (AP) — Reprogramming computers in Britain to stop them fouling up on dates after year 2000 will cost an estimated £31 billion (\$50 billion), says the head of the government body set up to tackle the problem.

The Financial Times on Friday said the figure by Robin Guenier, head of Taskforce 2000, is the first time the work has been officially priced. It said Guenier's figure is about three times higher than most of the "guesstimates" by business consultants and computing services companies up to now.

The paper quoted Guenier as saying in an interview at which he produced the figure that his calculation is the first attempt to put a sensible figure on the cost of overhauling billions of lines of computer code in Britain.

The problem arises all over the world wherever older computers are in use because many only recognise years by their last two digits. They record 1997, for example, as 97.

This means that until they are reprogrammed, they register year 2000 as 1900, because the last two digits of both are 00, then count forward registering 2001 as 1901 and so on.

The Financial Times said the effects are already being seen in inaccurate sell-by dates on some foodstuffs in supermarkets and on financial documents.

It quoted Guenier as saying he based his figure on estimates of the proportion of Britain's 4 million companies likely to be affected and the known number of staff engaged exclusively on the problem.

It quoted him as saying British companies estimate they will need to assign a total of 300,000 staff to tackle the problem. That is roughly the same as the number of full-time computer professionals in the entire country.

NEW YORK (AFP) — A popular U.S. television comedy star has come out of the closet, and soon her fictional character will too.

"Yep, I'm gay," said Ellen Degeneres, 39, on the cover of Time magazine, which devoted eight pages to Degeneres and her television sitcom "Ellen."

In an April 30 episode, Ellen Morgan, her character who works in a bookstore and has never had good luck with men, will reveal that she is a lesbian.

Gay groups are planning to watch the show together, while Christian Conservatives are displeased and ABC is keeping a low profile.

Ellen's character has always had a sort of

Nude not rude — naked Australians

CANBERRA (R) — Australian nudists fighting local plans to stop nude bathing gathered at an east-coast beach Saturday for a protest which police said was outnumbered by onlookers.

Police in Byron Bay, a haven for movie stars, socialites and hippies, told Reuters about 200 people had joined a "nude-in" to protest a local council crackdown on naked beachgoers. "There's a lot of onlookers," Senior Sergeant Beverley Blanch said by telephone, adding

there were more watchers than protesters.

The Byron Hands Off Nudism Committee organised the "Nude Ain't Rude Rally" to protest recent efforts by local authorities to stamp out nudism on beaches around the resort town, more than 600 kilometres north of Sydney.

The demonstration, which organisers said was focused on families and fun, included nude surfing, a nude reggae band and a nude comedy routine.

Spokesman Dean Jefferys said the committee asked

local celebrities, who include actor Paul Hogan, star of the movie "Crocodile Dundee," to join the protest.

It was not clear if other local stars took part, but Hogan, who has a luxury home at Possum Creek, 20 kilometres west of Byron Bay, was reportedly out of the country.

Blanch said the protest was peaceful and there had been no official complaints to police, which are needed before charges can be laid over offensive conduct.

"We are just playing it by ear," she said.

British soil expert stops Pisa Tower from leaning further — report

LONDON (AP) — Pisa's famous leaning tower has been saved from toppling further by a British soil expert, who advised authorities to place large amounts of lead on one side of its base, the Times of London reported.

"We are euphoric. The tower has stopped its tilt. This is the greatest success in seven centuries," Saturday editions of the Times quoted John Burland as saying.

Burland, professor of soil mechanics at Imperial College, London, said authorities did not aim to straighten

the tower, a major attraction in the northern Italian city of Pisa, but halt its inclination. "Otherwise there would be no leaning tower."

The Times said Burland was called in four years ago after Italian authorities calculated that the tower, by then some five meters out of perpendicular, could topple by the year 2050.

On his advice, 900 tonnes of lead was laid on the ground around its high side, the Times said.

The Italian government has invested millions of dollars

and canvassed widely for advice to secure the circular Marble Bell Tower, which was closed in 1991 for safety reasons. City authorities hope it can be reopened by 2000.

Begun in 1174, the 54-metre, 15,000-tonne tower was completed 186 years later. The ground beneath the structure started sinking after the first three of its eight stories were finished. The tower has walls 3.9 metres thick at its base and about 1.8 metre thick at the top. The structure has tipped about 30 centimetres during the past 100 years.

NEWS IN BRIEF

2 killed in Kashmir border shelling

SRINAGAR, India (AFP) — Two Indians, including a child, were killed and eight injured Saturday as Indian and Pakistani troops traded fire on the disputed Kashmir border for the third day in a row, defence officials said. Defence spokesman S. Proshotham said Pakistani troops resorted to "unprovoked firing and shelling" on Indian positions in the Kargil sector. "The firing has been going on since April 9 and they are deliberately targeting the civilian population," he said. Unconfirmed reports, however, said three civilians and an Indian soldier died in the incident in mountainous Kargil, 250 kilometres south of this summer capital.

Brewery making beer with marijuana cousin

WASHINGTON (AFP) — An upstart brewery is making the first U.S. beer to combine beer with a marijuana-related plant. Hempen Ale will be made partly with Chinese-imported hemp seeds to give the new brew "kind of a creamy head, and kind of an herbal, floral smell," said Marjorie McGinnis, president of Frederick Brewing Company near Washington. "It's hard to describe. It has kind of a nutty taste. It tastes like beer with a twist," she added. Hemp is a cannabis plant related to marijuana. But sterilised hemp seeds lack the chemical that gives marijuana users their "high." Nevertheless, use of hemp seeds in the new beer is drawing opposition from drug-abuse activists, even if the U.S. government has approved the use. "I can't believe these people," said Marilyn MacDougall, of the California group called drug use is life abuse. "Make pumpkin beer. Make raspberry beer. But hemp? It sends the wrong message to kids," she said.

Police recover stolen Ford prototype car

DETROIT (R) — An experimental Ford Taurus that police estimate was worth \$250,000 went for an unexpected test drive this week when the vehicle was carjacked. Although spy photographers routinely stalk prototype vehicles in the Detroit area, it was believed to be one of the first times an experimental car was actually stolen at gunpoint in the motor city. The incident began Wednesday evening as the car, being driven by a Ford engineer, was parked outside a video store on the east side of Detroit. Police said the 1997 Taurus looked like a normal version of the sedan from the outside, but inside it was filled with \$60,000 worth of computer equipment used for measuring gas mileage of an experimental engine. Police said two teens drove the car to a nearby apartment. Acting on a tip, officers found the teens and recovered much of the computer equipment, which had been removed from the vehicle and scattered around the building.

Charles and Diana 'friends again'

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's Prince Charles and his ex-wife Diana, Princess of Wales, have become close friends again and aides are discussing when to stage their first public engagement together for two years, it was reported Saturday. The Sun newspaper claimed Diana regularly calls Charles for advice and their once icy relationship has thawed to allow regular meetings at Diana's residence at Kensington Palace in London. The paper said Charles' mistress Camilla Parker-Bowles has no objections to a public meeting between the two. "Diana has turned to Charles for advice and comfort," the Sun quoted a royal source as saying. "And he has responded because he feels some sympathy for her position following the divorce. 'Both are making a real effort to genuinely get on. And it doesn't seem to be difficult.' The source said the queen's golden wedding celebrations in November were being considered for Charles' and Diana's first public engagement together.

Journalists pledge to end cash-for-news

SHANGHAI (R) — Shanghai journalists have pledged to stop taking money in return for writing news stories to order, the official Wen Hui Bao newspaper reported on Saturday. The newspaper said the city's Propaganda Department on Friday hosted a meeting of journalists to encourage a sense of morality in the news industry and to publicise journalism guidelines announced by the central government in January. The newspaper said in a commentary that while there had been big improvements in "building morality" amongst journalists, the practice of paid journalism had not been wiped out. "This corrupts the ranks of journalists, damages the reputation of journalism and has a bad influence on society," it said.

Love couple battered to death in India

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A young couple who eloped from an Indian village were battered to death by the girl's family for bringing "disrepute" upon them, the Hindustan Times reported Saturday. Vijender Singh, 19, and his girlfriend, Munesh, died to death at Simhaoli village near here last week after being attacked by the latter's family with iron rods, wooden clubs, knives and sickles. The bodies were then flung outside the girl's home, the Times said. The police arrested the girl's father, two brothers and an uncle on charges of murder and were looking for a fifth attacker. Love marriages are virtually outlawed in Indian villages, where weddings are arranged by parents. Even the dead girl's sister refused to denounce her twin's murder.

Female entrepreneur of the year is a man

COLOMBO (R) — A Sri Lankan who won an award for being best female entrepreneur was arrested this week — for being a man, police said Saturday. The man, identified as 36-year-old Sattambige Sriyarnatne, had posed as a woman for about three years, received bank loans amounting to 33 million rupees (\$500,000) and ran a successful business exporting prawns, police said. "He had posed as a wealthy woman, well connected to some leading government personalities," said Mohamed Nizam, deputy inspector general of the police crimes branch. "That and his forced female charm are probably what made him a successful businesswoman," Nizam told Reuters.

Teachers go back to school, to study

BEIJING (AP) — Millions of China's school teachers have been told to go back to school to meet formal qualifications for their jobs, an official report said Saturday. Only 55 per cent of the nation's high school teachers have met standards set by the state education commission, the newspaper China Daily reported. It said 90 per cent of primary school teachers and 70 per cent of junior high school teachers met requirements. China has 9 million school teachers. Many have been teaching for years without adequate formal training because of a shortage of qualified teachers and because of disruptions to the education system during the 1966-76 cultural revolution. Beginning this year, all teachers from the kindergarten level up will be required to pass qualification examinations before they can go back to work, the report said. A notice issued by the commission said that teachers would be allowed to study full time for several months or part-time for one to two years, as part of the training programme. Working and living conditions for teachers also are to be improved, it said without providing details.



KORUBO INDIANS: Sydney Possuelo (left), Brazil's top Indian expert and former president of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), makes friendly contact with a group of Korubo Indians in the Javari Valley, near the border with Peru in the Amazonian jungle. Last October, a team led by Possuelo made the "white man's" first friendly contact with the isolated Korubo tribe, some 200 to 300 in number. They have regarded all newcomers as enemies, meeting them with poisonous darts and clubs. Nearly 20.5 million acres of jungle in the Javari Valley will be turned into the nation's second-largest reserve (Reuters photo)

Britain denies links with Sri Lankan Tiger separatists

COLOMBO (AFP) — Britain, which brokered a landmark peace deal in its former colony Sri Lanka, denied Saturday links with the island's separatist Tamil Tiger guerrillas.

The British High Commission (embassy) here said in a statement the deal had no contacts with the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) which maintains an office in London.

Deputy Foreign Secretary Liam Fox, confined his initiative to discussions with Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunga and her arch-rival and opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, the high commission said.

The British High Commission is concerned by the speculative nature of some of the comments in the Sri Lankan and the Indian press alleging links between the British government and the LTTE, the statement said.

Political sources said that the agreement between the two Sri Lankan leaders to adopt a common stand on

Residents flee homes in quake-hit China town

BEIJING (R) — A north-western Chinese town, struck by a powerful earthquake and a series of aftershocks Friday, has been turned into a tent city as frightened residents fled homes and offices, officials said.

The quake measuring 6.6 on the Richter Scale killed nine people and injured 60 in Jiashi in northwest China's Xinjiang region, officials said Saturday.

Rescue efforts in the town of about 270,000 people were being directed from makeshift offices, they said.

"We are working from a tent," said a local official, speaking from a hastily-installed telephone.

"We have been working through the night to maintain security and ensure rescue operations," he said.

Other residents said the numerous aftershocks had flattened most older dwellings and had damaged many newer, multi-story buildings.

Army and paramilitary units were helping with rescue efforts and President Jiang Zemin asked local government leaders for a report on the disaster.

The quake was the latest in a series of tremors that

Prodi's government wins vote of confidence in parliament

ROME (AFP) — Italy's 11-month government won a vote of confidence in parliament's lower house Saturday, reaffirming its right to rule after a brief defection by its coalition partners.

The reformed Communist Party returned to back Prime Minister Romano Prodi's party in the vote. The left-wing government won by 321 votes to 266, with one abstention.

The motion was called after the 35-seat reformed Communist Party had abandoned Prodi on the deployment of Italian soldiers to Albania in the 6,000-strong multinational force during a parliamentary vote Wednesday.

Prodi's minority government was forced to woo parliamentary support from the right-wing opposition headed by former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

Before the vote, the prime minister thanked Berlusconi, "for having permitted the departure of the Italian mission to Albania," and suggested the creation of a parliamentary commission to oversee the force's mission.

The government-dominated senate had given its backing to Prodi Thursday.

However, Prodi's renewed majority may be short-lived as the government faces hard times over upcoming reforms of the social security system, demanded by the centrist wing of the coalition and denounced by the reformed Communist Party.

The Italian premier warned the Communists that the government could not allow itself "more splits," and, in a speech to the senate, he warned he would not "govern at any price."

Prodi said Italy would not tolerate another government crisis while they push through reforms to meet criteria to participate in the first wave of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU).

"We have taken the bipartite road and it is difficult," he said Saturday, stressing the need for a "strong majority."

He repeated his conviction of the need to reform the welfare state "immediately," though he reminded the Communist Party, "we also are concerned about the difficulties facing the poor."

This programme is extremely delicate for the government, Prodi plans to reduce the national debt through reforms of the social security system, particularly pensions, to meet requirements for the single currency.

However, the head of the

Police ban gatherings in Central Java

JAKARTA (R) — Police have banned mass gatherings in four towns in Indonesia's Central Java province after a series of clashes between supporters of rival political parties, the official Antara news agency reported Saturday.

The news agency quoted a senior police officer as saying no gatherings would be allowed in the four towns ahead of the start of the campaign for May 29 general elections. "I have already instructed all police chiefs in Temanggung, Wonosobo, Kebumen and Magelang towns not to issue permits for such activities," Colonel Apit Endang Rusdini was quoted as saying by Antara.

Antara gave no further details. The official campaign will start on April 27.

At least three government offices, 11 vehicles and dozens of homes were damaged and 14 people were injured in Wonosobo in clashes between supporters of the Muslim-based United Development Party (PPP) and the ruling Golkar Party Wednesday, newspapers said.

Slow-motion flood disaster looms for northern U.S. plains

FARGO, N.D. (R) — Flood-weary residents of the northern plains heard the bad news on Friday that high water could persist for weeks as the slow-motion disaster put a strain on temporary flood barriers and on emotions.

"We're looking at a slow continuous melt," Capt. Pat Richards of North Dakota's Emergency Management Division said. "We've been warning people that a lot of reservoirs will have to put out water, so those river levels will likely stay up for quite some time."

"There's so much water that still lies south of Fargo the river will probably be in flood stage at least two to three weeks," geologist Donald Schwen said.

Vice President Al Gore arrived for a quick tour of the three-state flood region, stopping in town, where he commiserated with flood victims.

Even where flooded rivers have receded in western Minnesota, returning residents were confronted with jagged ice filling their homes and freezing their cars in place. Farmers freed livestock trapped as water froze around their legs.

The week of flooding peaked at an historic level in Fargo, where National Guard troops patrolled a makeshift dike of earth and sandbags holding back the cresting Red River.

"We've won the battle so far but we need to continue our efforts," Fargo Mayor Bruce Furness said. "Now the problem becomes one of follow-up and making sure those dikes hold. We are not out of the woods by any means. It may take 10 to 14 days before we really feel safe."

Last weekend's storm that brought rain, ice and a heavy coating of snow has

New York versus U.N. parking war escalates

NEW YORK (R) — A battle is raging, neither side is taking any prisoners, a concerned United Nations spokesman said Saturday. But it's not civil war in Africa or strife in the Middle East stirring up the diplomatic world this time. Instead, the city of New York and the United Nations are waging war over the issue of diplomatic parking.

U.N. diplomats claim they are being ticketed and harassed by over-zealous authorities, and threaten to take the matter to the lofty heights of a General Assembly debate.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani says diplomats park illegally and refuse to pay millions of dollars in outstanding tickets under the cloak of diplomatic immunity. Firing a shot heard around the world, the mayor has jolted the U.N. to leave town.

Never have relations gotten quite this bad. Just ask those who sat in Giuliani's seat before him.

"The U.N. is its usual arrogant self, but they're up against someone equally as arrogant," former mayor Ed Koch said, adding, "in each of them, you see the worst of an institution and the worst of a human being."

Koch, who said he sides with Giuliani on the issue, earned himself international renown in 1975 by calling the U.N. "a cesspool" for its resolution equating Zionism and racism.

Former Mayor David Dinkins, who recently ruled out a run to regain his old job in city hall, sounded troubled over the testy state of affairs.

"To suggest almost that we don't care if the United Nations leaves New York is a grievous error," he said.

As relations deteriorated this past week, a U.N. committee voted to turn the parking issue over to the 185-nation General Assembly for debate.

Adding insult to injury, a Russian diplomat complained that even as that vote was taken, a Russian mission bus with passengers was being towed. Police said it was double-parked and passengers climbed on board only to obstruct the towing. An hour of negotiations ended with the bus's release.

The mayor shows no signs of backing down. Asked by a reporter on Friday if he wanted to be remembered as the mayor who chased the U.N. out of town, he replied, "I wouldn't mind."

"If the United Nations thinks ... they can push us around and let a country like the Russian Federation get 30,000 tickets in one year and we're going to sit back and let them threaten us, they've got another thing coming," he declared.

The heightened tensions can be traced to a scuffle last December between police and envoys from Russia and Belarus. Each side said the other threw the first punch, and the mayor demanded both

diplomats be sent packing.

In an effort at a brokered peace, the State Department and the city reached a deal, effective last week, under which diplomats with outstanding fines would lose their special licence plates. But the U.N.'s legal counsel found it violated the law on diplomatic immunity.

"Diplomatic immunity is like virginity, either you have it or you have not," said Jose Eduardo Martins Felicio of Brazil when the law took effect. "I have not seen a half-virgin."

In Washington, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns called on Friday for "cooler heads" to prevail in New York.

"World peace is not at stake on the issue of parking tickets," he said.

The State Department was considering another plan to deny a foreign mission a new licence plate if one of its diplomats was a repeat offender with significant unpaid fines, he said.

City officials suggest

Turin shroud saved by 'miracle' in blaze drama

TURIN, Italy (R) — The Turin shroud, one of Roman Catholicism's most revered relics, was spared by a "miracle" Saturday when a devastating fire swept part of the 15th-century northern Italian cathedral where it was kept.

Flames destroyed the chapel housing the mysterious shroud, but firemen, defying suffocating heat, spirited the treasured piece of cloth to safety after one of them smashed through its bullet-proof glass security shield with a sledge hammer.

No one was injured in a battle lasting almost seven hours to bring the flames under control.

"It's intact, it's a miracle," Cardinal Giovanni Saldarini said after jubilant firemen carried out a silver box containing the shroud, a piece of cloth imprinted with the image of a man's body that many faithful believe to be the figure of Christ after his crucifixion.

The fire also caused considerable damage to sections of an adjacent royal palace, now a museum, where hours earlier United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan had attended a banquet in his honour.

Deputy Prime Minister Walter Veltroni said initial information suggested the fire was not started deliberately and he pledged government money to help repair the destruction.

"This was a cultural heritage that belonged to all humanity," Veltroni said. "We still have to understand what happened, what started this fire. Information I have seems to exclude arson," he added.

Security guards reported seeing flames shortly before midnight Friday coming from the back of the cathedral, in the Guarini chapel, which was under restoration and clad with scaffolding.

A huge crowd gathered outside the Renaissance Cathedral in the heart of this prosperous city, to watch the dramatic blaze, which lit up the night sky as flames surged through the part of the roof and started to attack the adjoining palace.

"I have suffered a night of tragedy," Turin Mayor Valentino Castellani told reporters. "This is an event which will be indelibly marked in the city's history."

Many people wept openly as they watched the blaze take hold, but a cheer went up when news spread that the precious shroud had been salvaged.

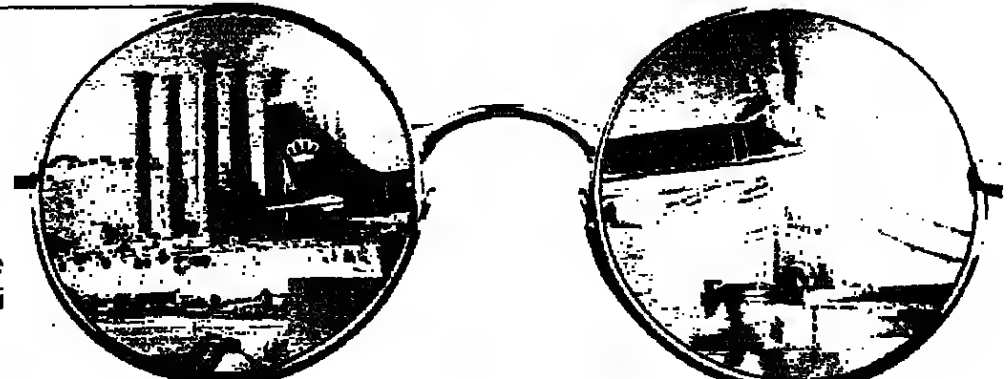
Cyberpunk terrorises Canadian family

EMERYVILLE, Ontario (R) — A cyber-prankster who calls himself "Sommy" has been terrorising a Canadian family by cutting into telephone conversations, turning their lights on and off and changing channels on their television. "It's been a living hell," said Debbie Tanaka, who lives with her husband and son in eastern Ontario. "No one calls us anymore," she told the Toronto Sun. The family reported the case in January, but so far, police and the Bell Canada Telephone Company are stumped. Changing the family's phone number and cable lines have failed to stop the electronic invasion. "We don't know exactly what's happening here. We don't know if it's someone with a lot of technical expertise or just someone having a joke," said Bell Canada spokesman John Peck. Sommy has called police, taunting them over their failure to foil him. "He's been taunting officers using an electronic device to disguise his voice," a spokesman said. "Actually, we don't even know if it's a man or a woman who's doing this."

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Agony of the road

THE FACT that traffic accidents increased by 16.6 per cent in 1996 over 1995 suggests that something is terribly wrong not only with the way we drive cars but also with the way our authorities are dealing with what is a real crisis. The police's Traffic Department has just released the road accident statistics last year, which paints a gloomy picture of traffic conditions in the country. Over and above the whopping 16.6 per cent increase in traffic-related incidents, the rise in casualties was even worse, a 17.7 per cent jump over the previous year. In actual numbers, 552 lost their lives and 15,375 were injured on our streets and highways last year compared with 469 dead and 13,184 others injured in 1995. Car registration in 1995 stood at 321,373 and 342,337 in 1996.

These figures show that the accelerated rate of traffic accidents, injuries and fatalities cannot be explained only by the increase in the number of vehicles on our roads. There are obviously other factors that have not been dealt with in an effective manner despite repeated warnings from several agencies and the public at large. The authorities put the blame on street capacities. In addition they cite the continued lack of protection to pedestrians who sustained the highest number of casualties; 239 killed, 197 of whom were children. Road accidents, according to the Traffic Department, took a heavy toll on children in particular due to lack of parks and playgrounds, which forces these kids to play in and roam the streets.

While we do share the view that lack of parks and playgrounds indeed contributes to the number of casualties, we do not think it is what makes the problem that bad. True our limited street capacities or lack of facilities for children, for example, are partially to be blamed for but such shortcomings in the traffic system can remain manageable provided other precautions are taken. How many times do our authorities need to be reminded that children going to and from school or those who are merely crossing neighbourhood streets are still doing so at their own risk and without any visible assistance from the police? When are we going to learn from other societies which assign police to stop traffic for children crossing streets especially when we still do not have a sufficient number of either traffic lights or zebra lines for pedestrians to stop traffic for them?

We cannot go on justifying the occurrence of traffic accidents. Drivers take the biggest blame but our authorities have not been performing their duties either. It is not enough to say that rented automobiles cause the biggest number of accidents or even trucks for that matter at a time when the police is nowhere to be seen or found when such dangerous drivers roam our streets undeterred.

Drivers still drive through red lights and Stop Signs because the police is busy doing something else like issuing tickets for parking violations. Unless and until our authorities take their duties more seriously there is not going to be an end to the carnage. The Traffic Department needs to look anew at the problem, and it certainly needs help from other quarters as well, before every family in Jordan bereaves over the loss of a member or more in a traffic accident.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE ARAB countries which had thought that the Europeans can help find a way to end the Arab-Israeli conflict and secure the restoration of Arab rights have been disappointed following the recent tour of the European Union's envoy Miguel Moratinos in the region, said Taiseer Zibri, a writer for Al Ra'i. The envoy's tour came to nought and his talks with the Israeli leaders to persuade them to halt their repressive acts and halt the settlement programme in order to arrive at a lasting settlement have ended in total failure, with the Israelis refusing to budge from their present adamant position, the writer noted. He said that the Arabs had hoped that the Europeans will at least persuade the Israeli prime minister to suspend the construction of the Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim, but it turned out that the Europeans are only following the lead of the United States, especially regarding the Jewish settlement issue, and are too timid to approach this hot issue. According to the writer, the Europeans have failed to even come up with ideas and proposals that do not conform with those presented by the U.S. administration and help the Arabs and the Israelis to resume the negotiations for their impotent position, the Europeans have won applause from Washington.

A WRITER for Al Ra'i criticised the Egyptian stand vis-à-vis the Middle East question, citing the recent statement by the Egyptian president rejecting the idea of Arabs boycotting Israel or withdrawing ambassadors from Tel Aviv in protest against the continued Israeli settlement programme. Orabi Riniawi said that for the past two years Egypt has brought the Arab-Israeli relations to the verge of collapse, once when it raised the hue and cry over Israel's refusal to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the second time when it temporarily refused to hold the Middle East economic conference in Cairo in protest against Israel's policies and lastly when Cairo led the Arab world's chorus in condemning Israel's plan to build the settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim in Arab east Jerusalem. The writer said that each time Egypt brought these matters to a head with Israel, it abruptly turned around and totally changed its position.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Jordan approaching financial self-sufficiency

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

SINCE THE establishment of the modern state in Jordan, 75 years ago, the treasury depended heavily on external financial subsidies. The first source was Britain, which used to supply almost half the budget, or all the military expenditure. When the British treaty was cancelled in 1956, Jordan replaced British aid with Arab aid. The government of the day entered into an agreement with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria to support Jordan with £12.5 million a year, for 10 years, which was thought to be all that Jordan needed.

Unfortunately, the three Arab countries did not honour their commitment due to the change in government that took place in Amman early 1957, which proved once more that external aid is always conditional and must infringe on the sovereignty of the recipient country, even if it were coming from an Arab source.

For 10 years after 1957, Jordan relied fully on American aid. However, after 1967 and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and the Arab summit conference held in Khartoum, the Arab oil-exporting countries decided to supply Egypt, Syria, Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) with generous financial aid, as confrontation countries.

In 1979, another Arab summit convened in Baghdad, following the conclusion of Camp David accord between Egypt and Israel, and a sum of \$1.25 billion a year was allocated to Jordan for 10 years, to be provided by all Arab oil-exporting countries. Libya did not pay from the very

start. Algeria paid one instalment only, other Gulf states ceased to pay their shares one after another due to lower prices of oil. Only Saudi Arabia continued to pay until the end of 1988.

Arab aid to Jordan was the first casualty of the Gulf crisis, which started in August 1990. Since then Jordan depended on foreign aid provided by numerous sources, especially Japan, Germany and European countries. Jordan also benefited from an Iraqi indirect subsidy, in the form of oil, at over 50 per cent rebate.

The current economic adjustment programme aims at self sufficiency. The deficit of the budget, before foreign grants, is being reduced gradually. The programme envisages a no-deficit target before the end of the nineties.

Natural resources in Jordan are extremely limited. Water shortage already reached the point of crisis. Arable land is not more than 5 to 7 per cent of the whole area. The Kingdom, however, is rich in phosphate and potash. The Dead Sea is a treasure only if the needed investments can be made to extract its minerals. These raw materials help increase exports and the establishment of an advanced fertilisers industry.

In the absence of oil, and with its meagre natural resources, Jordan depends on its human capital. It would concentrate on education and training to upgrade its manpower.

The weak points in the Jordanian national economy are: small size, scarcity of resources, difficult regional circum-

stances, external debt burden and the consequences of the Palestinian question. The result was low per capita income, high unemployment and the spread of poverty.

Jordan tackled its economic troubles by the implementation of an International Monetary Fund (IMF) economic adjustment programme, achieving peace with Israel, improving the climate for foreign investment, signing the European partnership (within weeks), applying for the membership of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), reforming its public administration (yet to be seen) and enhancing the role of the private sector.

Some observers were in the past convinced that Jordan's need for external financial support is permanent. They thought that Jordan cannot stand on its feet and become self-sufficient and financially independent. However, the last five years changed this conviction. It is evident now that Jordan is steadily approaching self-sufficiency. The deficit in the budget, excluding grants, is now in the order of 3.1 per cent of the GDP, down from over 18 per cent five years ago. The deficit in the current account is around 3 per cent, down from 20 per cent. The Central Bank is accumulating a reasonable reserve of foreign exchange. The average rate of economic growth is to the tune of 6.5 per cent in constant prices. The tourism sector is flourishing as a major earner of foreign exchange.

To sum it up, the Jordanian economy proved to be viable. It only needs support for two to three years.

Debasing the language of discourse: Bulldozers and stones

By Dr. A. Clare Brandabur

AS THE crisis in the Palestinian lands worsens, it is interesting to see the language of journalists and official spokesmen shift: on the positive side, Arab states are defining themselves more definitely in support of the Palestinian cause, at a rate proportional to the perceived seriousness of Israeli threats against Islamic holy places. On the negative side, U.S. and British representatives have backed away from the language of international law, referring to the theft of Palestinian land as "Jewish building on land which the Palestinians regard as occupied land" (April 11, BBC news) and Nicholas Burns (though coming from the U.S., this is hardly new) continuing to refer to "zero tolerance for terrorism" as applying only to Palestinian reaction to official state terrorism by Israel.

The U.S. has made no comment, as far as I have been able to ascertain, on the shooting to death of an unarmed Palestinian youth in Hebron on April 8 by a Jewish yeshiva student. Yet, in a furious reaction that would be comic if it were not so pathological, Washington has asked the U.N. to condemn Iraq, not for a terrorist attack, but for using one of its planes to fly elderly pilgrims to Mecca. And the grounds are Iraqi disregard of U.N. resolutions and international opinion! This righteous indignation is ludicrous in light of the two recent vetoes of Security Council resolutions condemning Israel for building Jewish settlements on Palestinian land, which violates dozens of U.N. resolutions and infuriates public opinion everywhere but in Washington.

Both Jewish and American spokesmen have tried to shift the rhetoric in this case to the question of how many houses will also be built for Palestinians, which is laughable in light of systematic confiscation, bulldozing and outright theft of Arab houses in and around Jerusalem. But, more to the point, this is not the issue. Surely the U.S. knows it has become the Emperor whose clothes are

invisible to everyone. What Washington must face is that, in light of their abject failure to secure a just peace in the Middle East, others will assert their right to try.

I am reminded of a similar shift in rhetoric during the weeks leading up to the bombing by the George Bush administration of Iraq and Kuwait following the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein. In the early autumn, the media reflected a fierce debate by all concerned parties about whether or not it was legitimate for the United States to bring massive military force into the Gulf, and whether there might be other ways to resolve the problem through diplomacy and the mediation of neighbouring Arab governments. Suddenly, in early December, the ground of discourse shifted for no apparent reason. A U.S. general raised the question about whether or not U.S. military forces were ready to undertake an assault on Iraqi forces. After that, the question of legality or morality simply dropped out of public debate. And the mas-

sive saturation bombing, which soon seemed inevitable, began. As an American who took an active part in demonstrations and protest hoping to prevent the tragedy, I can attest to the shameful suppression in U.S. media of all voices opposed to the grotesque performance called "Desert Storm."

No one was allowed to hear those sane voices which tried to remind the public that the Pentagon (in a meeting leaked to the New York Times in May, a good three months before Saddam's invasion of Kuwait) had been frantically casting about for a country with a military capability which would make an enemy sufficiently strong to maintain the billions in the Pentagon budget. Unable to think of a sufficiently good reason to bomb Germany or Russia, now that the cold war was officially over, American military strategists alighted on Iraq whose military capabilities they knew well, having helped to augment them during the ghastly Iran-Iraq war. What followed was the April Glaspie hoodwinking of

Saddam, miraculously just at the moment which Neil Bush, the crown prince of the Bush administration, was supposed to go to prison for defrauding thousands in the Saving and Loan scandal. Power gives governments the ability to dictate the language in which history is discussed and decided. But it is important to remember that all Jewish settlements in occupied territory are illegal according to international law. The Palestinian people had every right to expect, when they entered the "peace process", that they would finally get meaningful self-determination in the West Bank and Gaza. Instead, what they actually have is the speeding up of land confiscation while their own soldiers are expected to stand by and watch — no, even to smother the quite natural outcry of a people who sacrificed hundreds of their children in a heroic intifada to demand an end to occupation.

Why has the ground of discussion shifted from the language of Resolution 242, and all the others on the inalien-

able rights of the Palestinians, to whether or not the Palestinian leadership is exerting sufficient efforts to quell "terrorism"? The miracle is that this long-suffering people can find in their hearts the shred of hope that allows them to protest.

I have been amazed at the heroism of the Palestinian security forces who have been put in an impossible position, as Eshel Ahmad predicted would happen after Oslo: they have become enforcers of Israeli oppression against their own people. They must be torn apart by their conflicting obligations.

If Oslo has legitimised a falsification of the terms of the debate, then perhaps its demise is not to be lamented. It is not the youth, with their stones, but Ariel Sharon, with his fanatical bulldozers, that is creating terror in Palestine, and no amount of rhetoric can obscure this reality.

The writer is on the staff of the English Department at Al Isra University, Amman. She contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

Filling the gap

By Marty Kaplan

LOS ANGELES — So I'm not Jewish after all. The conclusion isn't mine, doesn't arise from personal soul-searching and will undoubtedly surprise my parents in Florida.

My excommunication comes from the 600-member Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, which has made obedience to the Torah's 613 commandments, the litmus test of Judaism.

To be sure, the rabbis are a very small group. But they have hit upon a real vulnerability — and not just among Jews. A lot of people cobble together their own concept of a Supreme Being, a fragile, ad hoc faith that gets them through the post-modern night.

How authentic is their idea of religion? How real is their God? Fundamentalists are satisfied with their answers. Are the rest of us?

It is considered a blessing to observe the Torah's commandments.

Some of them, like the Ten Commandments, make sense to me as moral rules. But others seem optional. The rules of keeping kosher, for example, helped Jews preserve their identity for millennia. But when my parents took us to Ming's on Lyons Avenue in Newark, New Jersey, on Sunday nights, they saw no risk of assimilation, or divine retribution, in ordering lobster Cantonese and I think they were right. Some of the commandments, such as not mixing linen and wool, strike me as deal-breakers. If you observe them as God's inviolable law, I stand in awe of your faith. Nothing I say to you will justify my sacrilege. So our only hope is pluralism, the big tent of tolerance.

Fundamentalists have God; we've got Kant, and maybe some kind of personal Supreme Being. Fundamentalists live by the literal word of the Bible; we live by its poetry. They are commanded; we are merely moved.

The writer, a former speechwriter for Vice President Walter Mondale, is a screenwriter and movie producer. The above article is reprinted from The New York Times.

Does the nation-state have a future?

By Neal R. Pierce

SALZBURG — Is the nation-state at the end of its 500-year run? Is it about to succumb to rapid-fire economic globalisation, resurgent regions or to ethnic and tribal rivalries?

Not entirely, say mid-career professionals from some 32 nations who came here in March to debate the nation-state's future at the elegant 18th-century palace that has been the site of the Salzburg Seminar for 50 years.

Whether from advanced or undeveloped, Western or Eastern nations, most participants agreed we will still need nation-states to give people identity, raise taxes, provide social safety nets, protect the environment and guarantee internal security.

But for a peek into the deep uncertainties of the 21st century and the astounding array of forces now undermining the nation-states, this conference was a remarkable tour de force.

Leading the parade of transformative change are globalisation and its accomplices. The computer and telecommunications revolutions enable instant worldwide communications to create new relationships, new economics, whether central governments like them or not.

Multinational corporations now assemble goods from plants across the globe and have moved heavily into services, too — law, accounting, advertising, computer consultation — as if the world were borderless.

Financial markets are also globalised. Where nation-states once sought to set exchange rates, private traders now control currency flows — at a scarcely believable level of \$1.3 trillion a day.

The nation-states faithfully shrank their own power by creating supranational institutions such as the United Nations, World Trade Organisation and World Bank. Each creates its own cadres of civil servants unaccountable to any single state.

Now comes a rise of influential, globally active non-governmental organisations — the NGOs — ranging from Greenpeace to Amnesty International to animal rights groups. They got official U.N. recognition at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992; now they are negotiating to get a voice in official U.N. deliberations. Yet the NGOs, like the multinationals, are mostly based in Europe and North America, feeding off cutting-edge technology, setting new global standards without much accountability to anyone.

Globalisation is creating immense wealth. Yet countries unwilling or unequipped to become technologically connected — many in Africa today, for example — face "marginalisation," another word for isolation and poverty.

At the Salzburg sessions there was real unease about globalisation — a fear that the world order now emerging would be too cruel, too amoral, too exclusive in its power-wielding.

Anil Saldanha, a corporate executive from India, gave voice to these concerns. "Man is not well," Mr. Saldanha said. "He is going through a process of insularity — insecurity, fright, fear. He doesn't know what's thrust on him, yet he must cope. So we need to look inward, to express our individuality, spirituality. If we do not put a human face on globalisation, bring humanity to the forefront, we may not have far to go."

A global market does not create a global community, another speaker commented. Yet the conference made it clear that the erosion of the nation-state is not only coming from above, it is creeping up from below.

One force is the rise of subnational regions impatient with the bureaucracy and unresponsiveness of large national governments. Nimble city-states — the "Asian tigers" of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore, for example — have been recent models of success. In 1970, four U.S. states had trade offices abroad. Now virtually all do and all have official standing in the World Trade Organisation.

Ethnic, racial and religious groups grasping for power are perhaps an even greater pressure from below. The end of the cold war untapped myriad ethnic nationalistic tensions.

Indeed, we may end up with more nation-states. The United Nations had 166 member "states" in 1991. It now has 185, and it could one day end up with 400 or more, just because of ethnic divisions. But how many will be viable nations? And what does the developed world do about the collapse of countries worlds removed from its sleek globalisation?

New hybrid structures — African, Asian or Latin American emulations of the European Union, for example — may be needed.

Perhaps we will see forms of community as unknown now as the nation-state was when it burst on the scene in the 16th century.

The Washington Post

Overseas assets of Arab Gulf states estimated at \$350b

ABU DHABI (AFP)—Arab Gulf states have an estimated \$350 billion in overseas assets but part is expected to flow back to take advantage of domestic reforms, an official said in press comments on Saturday.

The bulk of the funds were accumulated during the oil boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) enjoyed huge cash surpluses, said Mohammed Al Mulla, secretary general of the Jeddah-based Union of GCC Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

"Some estimates indicate that the total GCC assets abroad are around \$350 billion," he told the United Arab Emirates (UAE) daily Al Khaleej.

Mr. Mulla did not specify those investments but independent reports showed they were concentrated in the West in real-estate, stocks and bank deposits.

GCC states — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the UAE — earned more than \$150 billion a year during the oil boom, when crude prices were above \$30 a barrel.

This compares with an average annual income of \$70 billion in the following years due to a drop in prices.

The decline in oil prices,

now around \$18, has combined with growing development needs, inflation and a weakening in the U.S. dollar to turn the financial surplus in GCC states into deficits.

This has prompted them to carry out reforms, including spending cuts, privatisation and improvement of investment laws.

"GCC states have gone a long way in improving their investment climate ... Given such factors and the risks facing overseas investments, we expect a large increase in private investment in the GCC," Mr. Mulla said.

"We hope the returning funds will account for a large part of the investments abroad. But we have to stress that it is difficult to repatriate all those funds as it is better to benefit from the added financial return on overseas assets in increasing internal investments," he said.

Mr. Mulla said the GCC economies grew by as much as 9.8 per cent in current prices in 1996 compared with six per cent growth in 1995. The surge was because of an increase in oil prices of 17.5 per cent.

In real terms, the combined GCC growth rate is estimated at 4.3 per cent in 1996 and two per cent in 1995, Mr. Mulla said.

Nyerere: Capitalism better than socialism

DAR ES SALAAM (AFP)—Julius Nyerere, Tanzania's founding president whose socialist policies impoverished the East African country, has said that a free market economy is a better way of creating wealth.

"(Capitalism) is best if it would help Tanzanians. I want to see capitalism helping to develop this country," Mr. Nyerere told journalists during an interview.

He said he supported ongoing reforms aimed at transforming the country's economy from its centrally-planned socialist orientation to a free market one.

He said socialism had brought prosperity to such Asian "economic tigers" as Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, but added that

those countries succeeded because their people worked for "wealth creation" and were not motivated by the desire to "steal from their countries".

He said Tanzania's state-run corporations had performed poorly because of political interference.

"The failure by public parastatals to perform their duties efficiently was caused by lack of independence to plan and implement their activities," Mr. Nyerere said.

Mr. Nyerere's socialist blueprint, the "Arusha declaration" of 1967, which led to nationalisation of private property, was in 1990 replaced with the "Zanzibar declaration" in which the ruling party resolved to pursue free market policies.

Big investments needed to support Egyptian reform

CAIRO, Egypt (AP)—Egypt needs investments of as much as \$4 billion a year to maintain the economic momentum that has made it a showcase of market reforms, two IMF experts wrote this week.

"This is a challenge that cannot be taken lightly. What makes things harder is that financing so much investment is not easy," they said in an article published in the Cairo edition of the London-based Al Hayat newspaper.

The article outlined the dangers ahead for the Egyptian economy, which in recent years has taken drastic steps toward a market economy, struggling off the remains of a socialist legacy from the 1960s and early 1970s.

The two experts — Mohammad Al Iryan, deputy head of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Middle East section, and Amer Basat of its staff — said the article expressed their views and not necessarily those of the IMF.

They argued that in addition to sizeable investments to speed up growth, Egypt also needed to improve the management of private capital and increase the efficiency of its industrial sector to counter competition.

Egypt's economy is forecast to grow five per cent in the fiscal year ending June 30 and to expand at a seven per cent annual rate by the end of the century. This won't occur, they said, without sizeable investments.

While foreign investors were expected to provide some of the needed investment, Egyptians must supply funds, too.

"Unfortunately, the savings of Egyptians are very low — only 18 per cent of the gross domestic product — when compared to international levels," they said.

President Hosni Mubarak and his reform-minded prime minister, Kamal Al Ganzoury, are working to slow the nation's high birth rate and reduce widespread poverty in this country of 63 million people.

Their solution is a wide-ranging economic reform programme — including the privatisation of more than 300 state-owned firms — to encourage high economic growth that increases families' incomes and reduces unemployment.

In a blueprint for the economy over the next 20 years,

Dr. Al Ganzoury this week called for billions in new investment — three-quarters from the private sector and the rest from the government — to achieve an annual growth rate of seven per cent.

His task since taking office in January 1996 has not been an easy one. As much as 30 per cent of Egyptians are living in poverty, the country's population is growing by a staggering one million every 10 months and more than 20 per cent of the work force is unemployed or underemployed.

Mr. Al Iryan and Mr. Basat said Egypt needed to streamline troubled state enterprises before their sale to private investors. They pointed out that most of the companies which have so far been privatised were profitable while in government hands.

They also said Egypt's industrial sector must become more efficient to withstand competition from a partnership pact currently being negotiated with the European Union.

The government's economic reforms already have brought down inflation from 20 per cent in 1991 to seven per cent and have increased foreign currency reserves to a healthy \$19 billion.

Monetary reforms have included the scrapping of a multi-tier exchange rate system, the liberalisation of the banking sector, improved money supply controls, more equitable tax collection and lower tariffs.

Egypt's dormant stock market was brought back to life and rapidly became one of the more attractive and liquid emerging markets in the region, drawing \$400 million in foreign investment in the second half of 1996.

Some critics have said the privatisation programme was not moving fast enough to match interest by investors. New stock issues are often oversubscribed, and such attractive sectors as telecommunications and transportation have so far been excluded.

Opposition politicians have charged that many workers will be laid off when more state-owned companies are sold. They say the reforms have encouraged corruption and the creation of a new class of rich Egyptians while worsening the lot of the poor.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates Prices as at 12/04/97 17:59

Currency	US\$	DM	FF	Yen	GBP	ITL	ESP
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7220	0.6148	1.4588	126.11	1.3977	1696.90
DE Mark	0.5807	1.0000	0.3366	0.9478	73.23	0.8112	984.85
GB Sterling	1.6271	2.8005	1.0668	2.3840	204.90	2.2742	2761.03
JP Franc	0.6880	1.1782	0.4205	1.0000	86.37	0.8368	1161.82
CH Yen	0.0079	0.0134	0.0057	0.0074	0.0067	0.0074	0.0086
CA Dollar	0.7188	1.2318	0.4393	1.0441	1.11	1.2153	1.3848
IT Lira	0.0006	0.0012	0.0005	0.0006	0.0006	0.0006	0.0006
NL Guilder	0.0016	0.0028	0.0010	0.0025	0.0021	0.0021	0.0021
FR Franc	0.0172	0.0297	0.0106	0.0250	0.0216	0.0216	0.0216

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	US\$	DM	FF	Yen	GBP	ITL	ESP
US Dollar	1.0000	1.7220	0.6148	1.4588	126.11	1.3977	1696.90
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	2.4999	0.9324	2.1412	0.8283	0.8283	0.8283
GB Sterling	0.2667	0.4668	0.1700	0.4010	0.36	0.36	0.36
Bahraini Dinar	2.48	4.271	1.643	3.96	0.8062	0.8062	0.8062
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.4748	0.1700	0.4010	0.36	0.36	0.36
Kuwait Dinar	3.2903	5.7294	2.1412	4.8053	1.188	1.188	1.188
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.4723	0.1700	0.4010	0.36	0.36	0.36
Libanese P1000	0.0006	0.0012	0.0005	0.0006	0.0006	0.0006	0.0006
Egyptian	0.0240	0.0416	0.0156	0.0366	0.0331	0.0331	0.0331

Energy

Commodity	US\$	DM	FF	Yen	GBP	ITL	ESP
Brent	17.70	31.20	11.50	26.50	2.40	2.40	2.40
WTI	16.45	28.50	10.50	24.50	2.20	2.20	2.20
Bony	17.70	31.20	11.50	26.50	2.40	2.40	2.40
Dubai	16.25	28.00	10.00	23.50	2.10	2.10	2.10
UL Gas	188.00	330.00	120.00	280.00	25.00	25.00	25.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	US\$	DM	FF	Yen	GBP	ITL	ESP
SA Riyal	0.2667	0.4668	0.1700	0.4010	0.36	0.36	0.36
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.4723	0.1700	0.4010	0.36	0.36	0.36
KW Dinar	3.2903	5.7294	2.1412	4.8053	1.188	1.188	1.188
BH Dinar	0.2723	0.4723	0.1700	0.4010	0.36	0.36	0.36
CY Pound	1.9482	3.3548	1.1968	2.844	2.844	2.844	2.844

Metal Prices

Commodity	US\$	DM	FF	Yen	GBP	ITL	ESP
Gold (oz)	346.7	616.7	223.7	500.0	45.0	45.0	45.0
Silver (oz)	4.75	8.40	3.00	6.80	0.60	0.60	0.60
Platinum (oz)	368.75	658.75	238.75	530.0	48.0	48.0	48.0
AL (3 Months)	1507	2670	960	2150	190	190	190
CU (3 Months)	2274	4050	1460	3250	290	290	290
Zinc (3 Months)	1233	2190	790	1750	150	150	150
Lead (3 Months)	633	1120	400	870	75	75	75
NI (3 Months)	7245	12775	4600	10250	900	900	900

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)

Currency	US\$	DM	FF	Yen	GBP	ITL	ESP
USD	5.58	9.88	3.58	8.08	0.68	0.68	0.68
GBP	6.00	10.80	3.90	8.80	0.75	0.75	0.75
JPY	0.53	0.93	0.33	0.73	0.06	0.06	0.06
DEM	3.00	5.40	1.90	4.30	0.37	0.37	0.37
FRF	3.20	5.76	2.08	4.64	0.41	0.41	0.41
CHF	1.73	3.10	1.12	2.50	0.22	0.22	0.22
ITL	7.13	12.80	4.60	10.20	0.90	0.90	0.90

Main Equity Indices

Index	US\$	DM	FF	Yen	GBP	ITL	ESP
New York	6391.69	1148.36	413.77	937.7	83.87	83.87	83.87
Nifty	737.85	131.85	47.85	107.85	9.78	9.78	9.78
London	4270.7	768.34	278.34	618.34	55.34	55.34	55.34
Tokyo	17846.98	3182.23	1132.23	2547.98	228.98	228.98	228.98
Paris	3340.05	597.56	214.56	480.56	43.56	43.56	43.56
Frankfurt	3340.05	597.56	214.56	480.56	43.56	43.56	43.56

Energy

Commodity	US\$	DM	FF	Yen	GBP	ITL	ESP
Coffee (lb)	193.83	346.7	123.7	280.0	25.0	25.0	25.0
Cocoa (lb)	1.45	2.60	0.95	2.10	0.19	0.19	0.19
Sugar (lb)	51.8	93.0	33.0	74.0	6.6	6.6	6.6
Wheat (lb)	6.0	10.8	3.9	8.8	0.75	0.75	0.75
Soya (lb)	22.58	40.5	14.6	32.5	2.9	2.9	2.9
Tea (lb)	142	254	92	205	18	18	18
Barley (lb)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rice (lb)	480	840	300	680	60	60	60

JOD Cross Rates

Currency	US\$	DM	FF	Yen	GBP	ITL	ESP
US Dollar	0.708	1.210	0.438	0.980	0.870	0.870	0.870
GB Sterling	1.151	2.050	0.748	1.680	1.500	1.500	1.500
DE Mark	0.4108	0.720	0.260	0.590	0.530	0.530	0.530
CH Franc	0.4441	0.780	0.280	0.630	0.560	0.560	0.560
FR Franc	0.1221	0.216	0.078	0.175	0.016	0.016	0.016
JP Yen	0.5606	0.980	0.350	0.780	0.700	0.700	0.700
NL Guilder	0.3656	0.640	0.230	0.520	0.460	0.460	0.460
IT Lira	4.4168	7.900	2.860	6.400	5.700	5.700	5.700

Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

ACROSS

1 Smart and fashionable

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Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

Wahsh blames deputy/minister policy for aggravating employment problems in the Kingdom

CIVIL SERVICE Commission Secretary General Mohammad Al Wahsh points to the policy of combining the posts of deputy and minister as being a direct and basic cause for the bloated civil service in the Kingdom. Noting that the economic problems were also a basic cause, Dr. Wahsh sees the situation worsening since 1989 when the appointments started to pick up and, later, flourished when deputies and deputies/ministers began a frenzy drive to hire staff. Such recruitments were based on the legal authority vested in the ministers without referring to the hiring principles approved by the Council of Ministers and the Civil Service Commission.

This "race" for hiring staff resulted in more overemployment and an expansion of the bloated sector, Dr. Wahsh said noting that there is a possibility to reduce the number of civil servants by 25 per cent at least with restricting of posts and abiding by the classification and description of jobs. This measure, he indicated, would be good enough to blow a "new positive spirit" in the system that would bring about higher productivity after removing "excesses."

Dr. Wahsh explains that downsizing the civil service should be characterised by objectivity and flexibility so as any reduction would not be based on individual evaluation or measured according to the years of services. Convinced that many posts are not currently occupied by the right persons, Dr. Wahsh, however, disagreed with traditional solutions.

He says that it is not beneficial to speak of retiring those who served more than 30 years or advisers and high-level officials because all of those do not number more than 3,000 personnel. Similarly, talking about specific grades or years of service overlooks the principle of qualifications and experience.

Other obstacles seen by Dr. Wahsh for administrative reform lies in the coming parliamentary elections as the retirement of large numbers of civil servants would cast doubts about the fairness of the elections. Even the radicals would see it as a free opportunity to be seized in campaigning for the elections, the senior official said. He also mentioned the general economic situation and such aspects of poverty, unemployment and high cost of living which will worsen the economic climate upon terminating the work of many civil servants and cutting their incomes.

The senior official saw tribalism, favouritism and ties in general as strong elements that would pull against the implementation of administrative reform.

In conclusion, Dr. Wahsh expected that 125,000 persons will be seeking civil service jobs this year. The number represents 86 per cent of the overall size of civil servants. He revealed that 150 advisers, 456 personnel in the special grade classification and 2,417 who served for more than 30 years are still employed at various government ministries and institutions (Al Rai).

Basel bankers highlight war on laundering, fraud in world supervision

BASEL (AFP) — Top world banking supervisors listed action to combat money-laundering and fraud within banks Wednesday in a plan to toughen policing and reduce the risk of domino failures.

The plan also stressed that auditors of banks' books, and outside officials who supervise banking activity, must be independent, and highlighted special problems associated with state-owned banks.

The Basel Committee on banking supervision published 25 recommendations "Basel core principles" for the supervision of how banks are created and financed, and how they manage and monitor their risks, and report honestly the state of their balance sheets.

The committee is based at the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), the so-called central bankers central bank. Point 15 stated: "Banking supervisors must determine that banks have adequate procedures in place, including strict 'know - your-customer' rules, that promote high ethical and professional standards in the financial sector and prevent the bank from being used ... by criminal elements."

It warned that public confidence in banks could be undermined by association, even if inadvertent, "with drug traders and other criminals."

It also warned that fraud could threaten the solvency of banks and the soundness of the financial system.

Stressing the importance of internal controls, it recommended that "employees should be required to report suspicious or troubling behaviour to a superior or to internal security" and that banks "should be required to report suspicious activities and significant incidents of fraud to the supervisors."

Point seven stated that an essential part of a supervisory system "is the independent evaluation of a bank's policies, practices and procedures" concerning lending and investment.

Supervising agencies "should possess operational independence" and supervisors "must have a means of independent validation of supervisory information."

It added: "In all cases, the supervisory agency should have the legal authority and means to conduct independent checks of banks."

In a special passage on state-owned banks, the report noted that "the correction of problems at these banks is sometimes deferred and the government is not always in a position to recapitalize the bank when required."

"At the same time, this support may lead to the taking of excessive risks by bank management," the report indicated. But "supervisors may have less influence over the senior management of such banks and less ability to remove them, when necessary."

The report made no direct reference to spectacular disasters in the banking industry in recent years, such as the closure of the BCCI bank, enormous and still open-ended losses by the French state-owned Credit Lyonnais Bank, and the failure of the oldest British investment bank, Barings.

The BCCI bank was shown to have been a high-yielding vehicle for fraud: Credit Lyonnais fell as a result of reckless expansion under the benign eye of the state; and Barings was brought down by a combination of fraud by a trader and lax supervision by his superiors.

There has also been growing concern, within the BIS and in financial circles generally, that the growth of derivative markets, and off-balance sheet

transactions, has increased the hidden exposure of links in the banking chain to liquidity crises.

Many of the 25 points are relevant to these examples, and the report said:

"Weaknesses in the banking system of a country ... can threaten financial stability both within that country and internationally. The need to improve the strength of financial systems has attracted growing international concern."

The recommendations were released for consultation so that the plan could be completed before annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in Hong Kong in September.

Economists say Bahrain to remain Gulf banking hub

MANAMA (R) — Bahrain will keep its position as the Gulf's main banking and financial centre in the face of regional competition, but it should work to forge closer ties with Asian markets to benefit from economic growth there, economists said.

"I think Bahrain would stand firm as a banking and financial centre not only in the Gulf but probably in the Middle East," a senior Arab banker told Reuters on the sidelines of a two-day Gulf economic forum.

"I don't see any other country in the region could easily take over, simply because the island has prepared the ground to become a financial hub since the early 1970s," he added.

Analysts say Bahrain, where economic growth has been sluggish in the past few years amid dwindling oil reserves, is facing increasing competition from other Gulf states — particularly Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

Banque Indosuez closed its treasury department in Bahrain at the end of 1996 and Swiss Banking Corp last year closed its offshore banking unit in the island.

But a new bank, First Islamic Investment Bank, opened in Bahrain in November. Saudi Arabia's Al Jomaih Group and Kuwaiti investors set up the offshore investment bank.

A \$35 million private equity placement offered by the bank in March to investors in Arab Gulf states and South East Asia to raise its paid-in capital to

\$50 million had been oversubscribed by 50 per cent.

Officials at the Bahrain Monetary Agency, the central bank, said there were 46 offshore banking units operating in the island at the end of 1996 with total assets of \$67 billion.

Economists, however, say in terms of value added Bahrain benefited little from banking, but should foster closer ties with nearby Asian countries and follow their example.

"Bahrain should work to strengthen its links with Asian countries to benefit from economic growth there," another economist said.

Bahrain's Prime Minister Khalifa Bin Sulman Al Khalifa, who inaugurated the forum, praised the Asian economic approach.

"I call for a study of their successful economic experiment... to contribute towards our goal of prosperity for everyone and consolidation of the pillars of security and stability," he said.

Bahrain's Finance and National Economy Minister Ibrahim Abdul Karim shared their views and urged Arab Gulf states to forge close economic links with the booming Asian countries.

"We need to pay increasing attention to our relationships with these economies which are already today — and which in the next century will continue to be — a major source of world economic growth," Mr. Abdul Karim told the gathering.

JORDAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - 51021001											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANISED MARKET SEARS PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 12/04/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DEV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
269,000 213,000	ARAB BANK	11.8	1.56	1	20	8130	257.50	256.50	1.00		
2,100 1,800	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	8	2200	3957	1.81	1.80	0.01		
5,500 4,250	CATCO AMBROS BANK	9.3	3.33	2	100	4981	4.75	4.51	0.24		
2,600 2,760	BANK OF JORDAN	10.5	0.00	2	300	882	2.90	2.92	0.02		
2,610 2,120	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	5.3	6.05	1	400	920	2.32	2.30	0.02		
5,100 4,250	JOR. HOUSING BK.	12.9	2.69	12	1309	8718	4.77	4.92	0.15		
2,950 2,440	JOR. KUNAFI BANK	19.2	0.00	6	4753	12544	2.65	2.65	0.00		
1,090 820	JOR. CULF BANK	4.8	8.64	9	5750	4660	0.83	0.81	0.02		
1,120 1,000	JOR. HIRAKH BANK	18.1	0.00	7	6000	2268	2.75	3.77	0.02		
1,440 1,000	PHILADEL. INV. BK.	9	0.00	3	618	702	1.16	1.14	0.02		
BANK SECTOR TOTALS						INDEX: 293.86	FCBG: -0.25	50	21850	60032	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS						INDEX: 118.17	FCBG: 0.00	1	30	128	
1,820 1,450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.5	7.23	11	20600	34182	1.65	1.66	0.01		
5,200 4,100	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	17.8	2.85	5	270	1192	4.30	4.50	0.20		
2,900 2,000	SHIPPING LINES	9.9	8.50	1	450	1528	2.35	2.35	0.00		
1,540 930	RAIL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	34	22800	23147	1.00	1.02	0.02		
800 410	HACH. REP. REPT. HACH.	9	0.00	4	2300	2242	5.4	5.4	0.00		
2,200 1,200	KCP. EAST HOTEL	12.4	0.14	2	214	258	1.20	1.21	0.01		
3,720 2,990	JOR. INTL. INV. ENDC.	12.1	6.56	5	750	2283	3.03	3.05	0.02		
2,220 1,650	UNITED CO.	8	6.51	4	2000	3280	1.70	1.69	0.01		
1,300 710	UNION LAMB DEV.	8	0.00	1	500	385	0.73	0.71	0.02		
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS						INDEX: 103.97	FCBG: +1.43	67	50084	67565	
3,730 3,060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.1	2.85	10	1891	6631	3.51	3.51	0.00		
10,400 8,720	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.3	7.88	2	10570	9120	10.16	10.15	0.01		
4,100 3,040	JOR. FIBER. IND.	10.7	5.19	31	10173	4960	4.64	3.65	0.99		
7,250 5,650	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	8.6	3.60	1	150	1043	7.02	6.95	0.07		
2,570 2,050	JORDAN DAIRY	7.6	10.86	1	80	113	2.25	2.25	0.00		
4,750 4,750	PAK. PAPER & PACK.	7.5	0.00	1	100	475	4.78	4.75	0.03		
2,210 1,490	JOR. PIPES MANFACT.	8.3	8.05	1	700	1042	1.49	1.49	0.00		
10,600 8,000	ARAB CHIM. DISTREN.	21.3	2.85	2	300	2340	8.00	7.80	0.20		
6,050 4,450	JOR. ALUMIN. IND.	12.0	0.00	2	1100	5240	6.75	4.76	0.01		
5,400 3,130	ARAB ALUM. IND.	8.2	9.06	2	750	248	3.00	2.31	0.69		
960 450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	11.4	0.00	29	21791	17515	0.54	0.54	0.00		
2,400 1,040	ARAB PAPER CONV. IND.	7.3	0.00	10	5400	876	1.05	1.08	0.03		
1,020 1,540	NATIONAL INDOS.	8.9	10.00	12	7200	4380	0.60	0.60	0.00		
1,540 730	INTERMED. PETRO. CHIM.	9	0.00	34	13550	10503	0.79	0.77	0.02		
3,730 2,130	RAIL. CARDS WIRE. HYP.	15.2	0.00	15	8850	2212	2.53	2.50	0.03		
1,170 570	JOR. SULPHUR-CHIM.	9	0.00	42	30500	22494	0.72	0.75	0.03		
1,670 1,120	ARAB PAPER. CHIM.	26.2	0.00	2	800	1119	1.40	1.40	0.00		
2,740 1,420	UNIV. HOUS. INDOS.	6.6	12.07	8	7000	10710	1.53	1.53	0.00		
1,820 1,450	JOR. INDOS. RESOURCES	15.9	8.47	10	2400	2632	1.17	1.18	0.01		
1,270 840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	24.3	0.00	17	10500	9464	0.90	0.89	0.01		
1,260 1,080	SYNT. TOBACCO	27.3	0.00	7	2900	2264	1.16	1.16	0.00		
1,670 900	UNION CH. & VEG.	28.8	0.00	4	750	682	0.90	0.91	0.01		
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS						INDEX: 116.46	FCBG: -0.05	244	128786	179282	
GRAND TOTAL						INDEX: 152.42	FCBG: -0.08	362	210750	307007	
PARALLEL MARKET SEARS PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 12/04/1997											
690 270	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	16.4	0.00	31	16900	7011	0.43	0.41	0.02		
790 790	JOR. TRADE PAC.	14.2	0.00	7	10350	4958	0.44	0.44	0.00		
850 670	UNION INV. SOI	65.1	0.00	5	12750	2185	0.67	0.68	0.01		
840 370	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	14	14700	6174	0.41	0.42	0.01		
950 740	AL-SHARQ INV. FSI	9	0.00	2	1068	605	0.62	0.62	0.00		
740 530	ARAB FOOD & MED.	8	0.00	2	11850	6755	0.57	0.57	0.00		
1,690 1,300	NATL. CHEMICAL	8	0.00	2	2100	3024	1.44	1.44	0.00		
690 420	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	8	0.00	4	2000	808	0.44	0.44	0.00		
850 400	NATL. MILK. IND. MANICO	8	0.00	45	47550	25154	0.51	0.53	0.02		
980 720	JORDAN STEEL	8	0.00	10	5650	4294	0.75	0.76	0.01		
700 420	ARAB REEST. ENDS.	8	0.00	1	150	151	0.51	0.51	0.00		
1,330 900	UNION TOBACCO 75%	8	0.00	2	400	260	0.90	0.90	0.00		
770 550	RAZI PHARM. 65%	25.9	0.00	20	21450	8405	0.60	0.62	0.02		
660 390	JED. ENDS.	8	0.00	4	5000	2073	0.41	0.42	0.01		
960 760	JED. CERAMIC	8	0.00	3	1500	1158	0.77	0.78	0.01		
820 590	NATL. POULTRY	8	0.00	4	8500	5060	0.59	0.62	0.03		
870 530	MED. PACK. COMPLEX	9.3	0.00	17	29850	23603	0.79	0.79	0.00		
4,250 2,420	ARAB STEEL PIPES	27.7	2.92	1	100	342	3.60	3.42	0.18		
GRAND TOTAL						169	202068	101857			

Majoli, Coetzer oust higher seeds

AMELIA ISLAND, Florida (R) — Both eighth-seeded Croatian Iva Majoli and 12th-seeded South African Amanda Coetzer ousted higher-ranked opponents in the quarter-finals of the Bausch Lomb Championships Friday.

Majoli, ranked ninth, beat fourth seed and sixth-ranked Conchita Martinez of Spain 1-6 6-3 6-3 in one hour, 36 minutes. Coetzer, ranked 14th, defeated ninth seed and 12th-ranked American Mary Joe Fernandez 6-2 6-4 in 75 minutes.

After a five-week break because of a thigh injury, 11th seed Mary Pierce of France looked indestructible as she won a 6-2 6-1 victory over error-plagued second seed Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain.

"I played really well and was really focused," Pierce said. "I didn't make mistakes. I did everything I had to do."

Eighth-ranked American Lindsay Davenport disposed of unseeded Jana Kandarr of Germany 6-2 6-2 in 58 minutes.

A tall serve-and-volleyer, Davenport is not known for her prowess on clay courts but this week is playing near perfect tennis. She has yet to lose her serve in three matches played.

"I've won four titles on clay, so I am a little deceiving," Davenport said. "I don't mind the clay and I don't love it. I don't slide very well, so I play hardcourt tennis on the clay courts."

In the semifinals, Davenport takes on Coetzer, while Majoli meets Pierce.

Martinez embarrassed Majoli in their first set. The Spaniard won 12 of the first 14 points played and the first five games before Majoli held serve in the sixth game.

"In the beginning, I was making too many errors," Majoli said. "Maybe I needed to get used to her game a little bit."

Martinez could not keep up the fast pace she established in the first set. Majoli was quick to seize the opportunity and take control of the match after losing her serve in the first game of the second set.

"She started playing great and making winners in the second set," Martinez said. "I just got really, really tired."

In the second game of the second set, Martinez had one game point at 40-30, but when she ended up losing her serve, the match turned in Majoli's favour.

The 15th-ranked Pierce could do no wrong during the 59-minute match, blasting winner after winner and often creasing the sidelines with perfect shots.

Pierce, winner of her last four matches against Sanchez Vicario, lost only 10 points in eight service games.

Fernandez had dominated the previous meetings with Coetzer, winning seven of nine times. But Friday, she never looked comfortable or entirely into the match.

"She wasn't willing to stay out there and play a really long match," Coetzer said.

Chang to meet Rafter in Hong Kong

HONG KONG (R) — Top seed Michael Chang brought the 14-match winning run of Sweden's Thomas Johansson to a halt on Saturday and reached the final of the Hong Kong Open.

Chinese-American Chang, winner of the Hong Kong Open in 1994 and 1995 and runner-up to Pete Sampras last year, eased past Johansson 7-6 6-4 in a disappointing semifinal.

Chang will now meet Australia's Patrick Rafter in a repeat of the 1994 final. The fifth-seeded Rafter reached

the final after American qualifier Brian Macphie, ranked 308th in the world, was forced to retire with an upper arm injury when trailing 3-6 6-1 3-0 in the other semifinal.

Macphie came out with all guns blazing and surprised Rafter in the first set with explosive serves and solid groundstrokes.

But he failed to keep his left arm warm during a break while Rafter had a blocked ear cleared by a doctor and it tightened up during the second set.

Chang and Johansson,

both with two titles on the circuit this year, swapped serve six times in the first set before Chang won a tiebreaker.

In the second set Chang upped the tempo and his solid baseline play and ability to run down seemingly irrefutable shots gave him the edge over the 22-year-old fourth seed.

Rafter said he would be careful about where and what he ate on Saturday night. On the eve of the 1994 final he had some seafood and then suffered from food poisoning during the match.

A's spoil Yankees' home opener in 12th inning; Padres beat Phillies

NEW YORK (R) — Rafael Bournival delivered a two-out RBI single in the 12th inning and scored on a single by Scott Brosius as the Oakland Athletics spoiled the World Series champion New York Yankees' home opener 3-1 on Friday.

"I always stay in shape to stay ready to do the job when I get the chance," said Bournival, who came into the game as a defensive replacement. "Yankee stadium has a great atmosphere. The fans are really into it."

Jeff Nelson (0-3), who has three of New York's five losses, allowed two runs and two hits in three innings as New York had a five-game winning streak in home openers halted.

Aaron Small (2-0), who was recalled from the minors on Wednesday and got a win against Boston the same day, walked two and struck out one in three hitless innings.

"This was just a great day for me," Small said. "I was aggressive. Things are going well."

The Yankees appeared headed for a 1-0 victory until the ninth inning, when Mark McGwire sent Mariano Rivera's first pitch 464 feet into the center-field bleachers to tie the game. It was just the 14th time a player has homered into that part of Yankee sta-

dium, the seventh by a visiting player.

The crowd of 56,710 — the largest regular-season crowd since Yankee stadium was remodelled for the 1976 season — witnessed the raising of the world championship banner by manager Joe Torre and former Yankees captain Don Mattingly.

The loss spoiled a stellar pitching effort by David Cone, who threw seven-plus shutout innings to extend his scoreless streak against Oakland to 21.

"It's disappointing to lose this way, but I have to feel good about the way I was physically," said Cone, whose 12 strikeouts were his best performance as a Yankee. "I haven't felt this good since early in my Mets days. I'm throwing with more velocity and life. I was definitely in control."

Paul O'Neill singled in Tino Martinez in the seventh for the game's first run.

In Boston, Randy Johnson pitched six strong innings to earn his first win since May 12 and rich Amaral had two hits and two RBI as the Seattle Mariners spoiled the Red Sox' home opener, 5-3.

In Cleveland, Sandy Alomar went 4-for-5 and Kevin Mitchell and Manny Ramirez both stroked three-run homers as the Indians had their best-ever output in



Cincinnati Reds' Reggie Sanders (R) steals second base as he slides in safe under the tag of Florida Marlins' Kurt Abbott during the fourth inning of play at Cinergy Field in Cincinnati. Marlins' manager Jim Leyland came out to contest the call with second base umpire Angel Hernandez (Renter's photo).

a home opener, 15-3 over the Anaheim Angels.

The Indians, playing in front of a Jacobs field regular-season record crowd of 42,643, batted out 20 hits.

Alomar set a new career high by scoring four times. Omar Vizquel knocked in four runs with three hits and Marquis Grissom went 3-for-3 with a pair of RBI.

David Justice also had three hits for the Indians, who batted around twice in

a pair of six-run innings.

Chad Ogea (2-0) got the win. Mark Gubicza (0-1) was smashed for six runs and seven hits in one-plus inning, falling to 9-27 with a 4.83 era in April and remaining winless against Cleveland since September 27, 1993. He is 10-9 lifetime against the Indians.

In Detroit, Matt Walbeck stole home and had a sacrifice fly and Damian Easley added two doubles and

scored a run as the Tigers edged the Chicago White Sox 5-4 for their fifth win in the last seven games.

In Baltimore, Mike Mussina (1-1) allowed one run on three hits with two walks and four strikeouts over seven innings and Rafael Palmeiro homered twice and drove in four runs as the Orioles beat the Texas Rangers 9-3.

Palmeiro has 10 RBI in his last seven games.

John Burkett (0-1) took the loss.

Florida's Rapp shuts out Reds

Pat Rapp pitched a five-hitter for his first shutout in 19 months and Moises Alou and Kurt Abbott homered as the Florida Marlins won their fifth straight Friday, 10-0 over the slumping Cincinnati Reds. Rapp (1-0), who earned a

spot in the starting rotation during spring training, walked two and struck out one while throwing only 99 pitches. It was his first shutout since he pitched the only one-hitter in Coors field history in a 17-0 rout of Colorado in 1995.

Marlins pitchers have tossed consecutive shutouts, limiting opponents to just six hits. Alex Fernandez had a one-hitter in Thursday's 1-0 victory at Chicago.

The Marlins improved the majors' best record to 8-1 and have not lost since a 9-7 defeat by Cincinnati on April 4.

The Reds have not won since that game, dropping five straight and surrendering 43 runs during that span.

In Pittsburgh, Ramon Martinez scattered five hits and four walks over seven shutout innings as the Los Angeles Dodgers pulled away for a 7-1 victory over the Pirates.

Martinez (1-1) struck out five. Three relievers worked the final two innings.

Francisco Cordova (1-1) kept Pittsburgh in the game, allowing three runs and six hits in seven innings with a walk and two strikeouts. He was looking for his second victory over the Dodgers in six days.

Los Angeles catcher Mike

Piazza left after being hit by a pitch to lead off the second. He suffered a contusion of the left elbow and X-rays were negative. Piazza will be re-evaluated Saturday.

In St. Louis, Ron Gant's two-out, two-run homer snapped an eighth-inning tie and lifted the Cardinals past the Houston Astros 4-2.

Gant's first homer of the season came off Astros starter Shane Reynolds (1-1) and broke a 2-2 deadlock. The win gave the Cardinals consecutive victories for the first time this season after opening the year with six straight losses.

In Philadelphia, Steve Finley drove in four runs, including a bases-loaded triple that keyed a five-run seventh inning, and Tony Gwynn added three hits as the San Diego Padres posted an 8-3 victory in the Phillies' home opener.

The Phillies, who went 3-6 on a season-opening nine-game west coast road trip, were trying to keep ace Curt Schilling (2-1) unbeaten in three starts, but the right-hander was ripped for seven runs in 6 2/3 innings.

Sterling Hitchcock (2-0) won his second straight start, limiting the Phillies to three runs and eight hits in 6 2/3 innings with two walks and five strikeouts.

LEGAL ADVISOR

EXECUTIVE PRIVATISATION UNIT GOVERNMENT OF HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

The Government of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has embarked on a privatisation programme which covers sectors such as telecommunications, electricity, transport, tourism and industry. The Executive Privatisation Unit (EPU), agency responsible for the design and implementation of the programme, wishes to recruit a lawyer, as Legal Advisor to the Secretariat, to advise and assist in legal issues, activities involved in privatisation. **The person should possess:**

- Minimum of 10-year experience in corporate law;
- Good knowledge of the Jordanian laws on property; labour; foreign investment; status, establishment and functioning of business organisations;
- Experience in merger and acquisitions; privatisation transactions, and business negotiations;
- Computer literacy and experience in word processing;
- Strong command of written and oral English; and
- Masters degree in law.

The Legal Advisor will be expected to:

- Assist in drafting legal documents involved in privatisation transactions (e.g., share sale and purchase agreement, concession contract, request for proposal, employee participation schemes, etc.);
- Advise on legal/regulatory preparatory work for specific PEs/industries as part of their privatisation, if necessary;
- Advise on legal issues (e.g., labour, contractual, liability, etc.) involved in all stages of the transaction (i.e., pre-privatisation, during privatisation, post-privatisation);
- Assist in responding to investors' legal inquiries;
- Assist in negotiations with prospective buyers/financial advisors and in signing of the contract; and
- In case of large transactions, requiring extensive legal/regulatory work, monitor performance of the law firm recruited for the transaction.

This will be a part time position for a period of not less than one year. Salary will be commensurate with qualifications and experience. Applications with recent CVs should be sent to the following address by April 30, 1997.

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PUBLIC RELATIONS EXPERT

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- Strong command of written and oral English; and
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- Raise public awareness of and support to the programme through marketing campaigns and mass media;
- Ensure rapid spread of information to all parties involved in and affected by privatisation;
- Ensure continuous communication with all parties involved in and affected by privatisation;
- Issue press notices, newsletters, brochures etc. on a regular basis to keep the public informed on the status of the programme and planned activities, and to sustain transparency, credibility and accountability;
- Advertise transactions and issue invitations for expressions of interest in local/international media;
- Organise panels, speeches, TV/radio programmes etc. on privatisation-related matters; and
- Assist the EPU in answering press clippings, all general inquiries and issues raised about the overall programme, specific transactions and functioning of the EPU.

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Carlos Moya

Tired Moya slumps out of Estoril Open

ESTORIL, Portugal (R) — Spanish number one Carlos Moya lost limply in straight sets to compatriot Francisco Clavet in the quarter-finals of the Estoril Open on Friday as the tournament took on a totally Spanish flavour.

Clavet, who needed just 63 minutes to dispatch the Australian Open runner-up 6-1 6-3, now meets countryman Felix Mantilla for a place in Sunday's final.

The other semifinal will be between Spaniards Javier Sanchez and Alex Corretja both of whom breezed into the last four

after each of their opponents retired injured in the second set.

Sanchez beat Austria's Gilbert Schaller, surprise first round victor over world number four Yevgeny Kafelnikov of Russia, when the Austrian abandoned their quarter-final with a pulled muscle when he was trailing 6-0 4-1.

Frenchman Fabrice Santoro withdrew with a back injury when he was 4-0 down in the second set against Corretja after having lost the first 6-3.

Moya, world number eight, blamed tiredness and

what he said was a heavy type of ball used in the tournament for his surprisingly easy defeat by Clavet, ranked 27 places below him.

Mantilla, who was delighted with his performance, defeated another Spaniard Alberto Berasategui 6-4, 6-1 in the last of the quarter-finals.

Mantilla said he had been "a bit lucky" in the first set which could have gone either way, but that in the second his superior fitness began to tell as Berasategui tired.

Jazz rout Rockets for 15th win

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah (R) — Karl Malone scored 28 points as the Utah Jazz matched a franchise record with their 15th consecutive win, a 104-83 rout of the Houston Rockets Friday.

Bryon Russell added 19 points for the Jazz, who also won 15 straight games from mid-November to mid-December.

Utah, which already has clinched home-court advantage throughout the Western Conference playoffs, reached the 60-win mark for the second time in three seasons.

The Rockets slipped into a tie with the Lakers for the third spot in the West.

"It was a nice win," said Jazz coach Jerry Sloan. "Most of the guys were a little bit tired, but we hung in there pretty well and played them fairly decent."

Hakeem Olajuwon scored 19 points and Mario Elie added 13 for Houston, which split four games with Utah this season.

Charles Barkley had just 10 points. Clyde Drexler was held to eight points on 2-of-15 shooting, including 1-of-7 from three-point range.

"We didn't play well," understated Drexler. "We looked like a tired group. But you have to give them credit, they played well."

At Los Angeles, Shaquille O'Neal and Nick Van Exel returned from injuries and scored 24 points apiece as the Lakers ended the Phoenix Suns' 11-game winning streak with a 114-98 victory.

O'Neal, who missed 28 games since suffering ligament damage to his left knee, was 12-of-22 from the floor and grabbed 11 rebounds in 24 minutes. He left after suffering a cut above his right eye, but returned for the third quarter after getting one stitch.

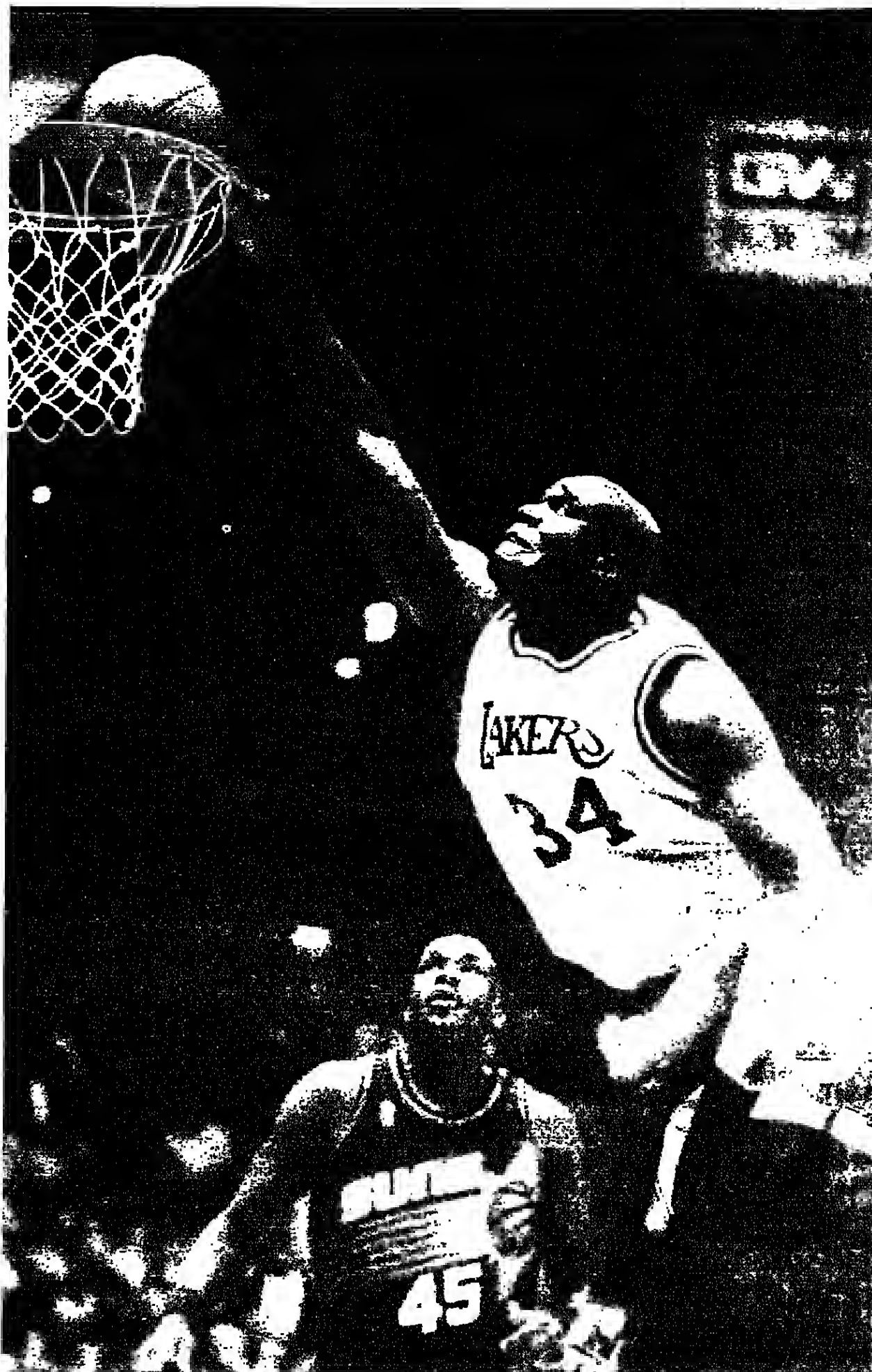
Van Exel, who missed three games with a bruised knee, added nine assists and keyed a third-quarter run for the Lakers, who won for the eighth time in 10 games and moved within one-half game of first-place Seattle in the Pacific Division.

Kevin Johnson scored 23 points and Rex Chapman 18 for the Suns, who fell into seventh place in the West, one-half game behind Minnesota.

At Washington, Juwan Howard scored 21 points to lead six players in double figures as the Bullets defeated the New Jersey Nets 109-90 to take sole possession of the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

In Boston, David Wesley scored five points in the final 35 seconds of overtime as the Celtics snapped their 10-game losing streak and dealt the Cleveland Cavaliers' playoff chances a crippling blow with a 103-101 victory.

Todd Day posted a season high with six three-pointers en route to 30 points for the



Los Angeles Lakers' Shaquille O'Neal sinks two points in the first period as Phoenix Suns' Mike Brown (45) watches during O'Neal's first game back following eight weeks on the injured list. O'Neal required surgery on his knee after landing incorrectly while grabbing a rebound (Reuters photo)

Celtics, who won for just the second time in their last 20 games.

Terrell Brandon recorded 31 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds for the Cavaliers, who have five games left to try to claw back into the playoff eight.

At Detroit, Anthony Mason scored 23 points and the Charlotte Hornets established a franchise record for victories in a season with a 93-85 win over the plummeting Pistons.

Charlotte, which also set team records with its fifth straight road victory and 23rd of the season, improved to 51-26, one win

better than its 1994-95 season.

Ricky Pierce added 20 points for Charlotte, which pulled into a tie with the Pistons for fifth place in the East.

Joe Dumars scored 21 points, including the 15,000th of his NBA career, for the Pistons, who suffered their fourth straight loss. Grant Hill recorded 20 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists for his league-leading 11th triple-double of the season and 22nd of his career.

At Indiana, the Atlanta Hawks hit seven of their first nine shots and led by as many as 20 points in the

first quarter before coasting to a 104-92 victory over the Pacers.

Mookie Blaylock and Steve Smith scored 23 points apiece to lead the Hawks, who shot 55 per cent from the field. The win moved Atlanta into a tie with the idle Knicks for third place in the Eastern Conference. New York holds the tiebreaker.

In Sacramento, Mitch Richmond scored 24 points and Corliss Williamson added 22 and a career-high 13 rebounds as the Kings kept their slim playoff

hopes alive with a 97-87 victory over the Golden State Warriors.

The Kings are 2 1/2 games behind the Clippers for the eighth spot in the Western Conference.

In Milwaukee, Glenn Robinson scored 40 points — 32 in the second half — and Ray Allen added 27 as the Bucks handed the Philadelphia 76ers their sixth straight loss, 126-118.

Rookie Allen Iverson had 44 points, his third consecutive 40-point effort, for Philadelphia.

Radulescu ousts Washington to reach Indian Open semis

MADRAS (R) — German Alex Radulescu took advantage of a knee injury blemishing American Malivai Washington to oust last year's Wimbledon runner-up in the Indian open quarter-finals Friday.

Romanian-born Radulescu, the fifth seed ranked 58th in the world, beat third seed and World No. 26 Washington 6-3 6-4.

Radulescu's semifinal opponent will be unseeded Frenchman Gerard Solves, a 6-4 1-6 6-2 victor over qualifier Rainer Schutler of Germany.

In the other quarter-finals, sixth seed Mikael Tillstrom of Sweden beat fourth-seeded American Jonathan Stark 7-5 6-3 and unseeded Romanian Andrei Pavel, who beat top seed Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands on Thursday, accounted for another seed by eliminating Swedish No. 7 Magnus Norman 6-0 6-2.

Radulescu, a semifinalist in the inaugural Indian Open tournament at New Delhi last year, seized the advantage with his booming service and used the width of the court to tire Washington.

"The knee injury was nagging me and it affected my mobility," Washington said. "But Alex was in brilliant touch with his rushing shots



Malivai Washington

and his service winners made him a potent force."

Pavel, who shocked Krajicek in the second round, was in fine form against Norman, who became exhausted in the first set.

Doctors were summoned

to examine him in the second set but allowed him to continue after testing his blood pressure.

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The Airport branch:
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Pope in Bosnia on visit amidst fears of attacks

Explosives found on pontiff's motorcade route in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO (AP) — Pope John Paul II arrived in the Bosnian capital Saturday on a long-delayed mission of peace that was in danger of being overshadowed by hatreds left from a long and bitter war.

Just hours before the Pope's jet touched down at Sarajevo's airport, police found 23 mines, plastic explosives and detonators hidden under a bridge along the 76-year-old pontiff's route from the airport to the city centre.

Bosnian officials said the explosives appeared to have been planted overnight. They were removed safely, and interior ministry spokesman Suvad Arnautovic said the area was secure.

There was no indication who planted the devices, but there has been a series of explosions at churches and mosques in Bosnia to heighten tensions and discourage the Pope from coming.

At the airport, a former front-line area sandwiched by shantied suburbs where many people struggle to survive, security was tight. North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) helicopters circled overhead, soldiers were posted on rooftops and armoured vehicles guarded key areas.

Pope John Paul waved to the crowd from the air-plane before making his way down the stairs to kiss a box of Bosnian earth. He was greeted by religious and political leaders including Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic and Roman Catholic Cardinal Vinko Puljic.

The Pope was seated under a canopy in the yellow-and-white papal colours for a welcoming ceremony. The welcoming committee included three women — a Muslim, a Serb and a Croat — who lost husbands or sons in the Bosnian war, and a pair of children who suffered the death of a parent.

Their presence symbolised the Pope's mission in Bosnia, said Father Marja Bricic, a spokesman for the Roman Catholic Church in Bosnia.

"The Pope is coming first of all to visit those who suffered most in the war," he said.

Officials have put on a massive security effort, but they have warned in the days leading up to the visit that dangers remained.

More than 11,000 police, backed by anti-sniper teams, explosives-sniffing dog teams and helicopters of the NATO-led peace force, are providing security for the Pope's 25-hour visit. The highlight is a mass at Sarajevo's Kosevo stadium on Sunday morning.

At the same stadium just 48 hours later, 2,500 Bosnian army soldiers will march in a parade marking the army's fifth anniversary, a reminder of both the war that ended in 1995 and the wariness that a new conflict could start. Mr. Izetbegovic will review the parade from the same stand the Pope uses.

Pope John Paul called Sarajevo a "sad symbol of the tragedies that have struck Europe in the 20th century."

He wanted to visit the Bosnian capital in September 1994, when it still was under Serb siege. That trip was cancelled because Serbs refused to ensure his security.

Thousands of international soldiers now are ensuring a peace that is more than a year old. Authorities and the peacekeepers say they are confident they can protect the Pope.

International soldiers, diplomats and civil servants also are trying to put Bosnia back together, but it often appears to be more likely to split apart.

Many among the Croats, Pope John Paul's Roman Catholic flock, would prefer to join neighbouring Croatia than live in their U.S.-backed federation with Muslims that makes up half of Bosnia.

Suspensions remain from the war Muslims and Croats fought in 1993-1994 within the broader Bosnian war.

Croats from the southern region of Herzegovina have angered Muslims and some Croats alike in Sarajevo by hanging welcome posters that show the Pope in a montage surrounded by young Croats and Croatian flags. For people here who are sensitive to the power of national symbols, the message is obvious.

Religious Jews protest against Sabbath travel on W. Jerusalem road

WEST JERUSALEM (AFP) — Hundreds of ultra-orthodox Jews tried Saturday to block a major road in West Jerusalem a day before the supreme court is set to rule on demands to close the road during the Sabbath.

The religious Jews who live along Bar Ilan Street throw rocks and other objects at passing cars, Israeli radio reported.

Police prevented several groups of the observant Jews from blocking traffic on the major thoroughfare, according to the state-run radio.

Seven judges of the supreme court will decide Sunday if the road will be closed on Saturdays — the Jewish day of rest — to respect the practices of the observant Jews living along Bar Ilan.

Under Jewish law, strict respect for the Sabbath means operating no machinery on the day of rest, including driving a car.

Several other roads are closed in religious neighbourhoods in the Holy City.

But secular Israelis argue the major road leading from the centre of the city to northern Jerusalem is used mostly by non-observant Jews and its closure will greatly disrupt travel.

After the right-wing election victory in May last year, which left religious parties with unprecedented power, ultra-orthodox Jews held massive weekly protests on Bar Ilan to demand its closure during the Sabbath.

Three religious parties represent 23 of the governing coalition's 66-seat majority in the 120-deputy Knesset, and they control five ministries.

A public commission appointed by the supreme court in August to look into the ultra-orthodox demands made a temporary decision in November that Bar Ilan should only be closed during prayers on the Sabbath.

But the protesters want the road shut for the entire Sabbath — sundown Friday to sundown Saturday.



PEACE ACTIVIST COLLAPSES: An Israeli soldier (center) watches an Israeli doctor Eitan Lvov, from Jerusalem (right), and Palestinian doctor Jamal Salsa, from Beit Sahour, attending to Israeli peace activist Uri Avneri after he collapsed and fainted from the heat on Saturday. Hundreds of Palestinian and Israeli peace activists gathered across from Jabel Abu Ghneim in Arab East Jerusalem where Israel has launched a Jewish settlement (Reuters photo)

EU recalls envoys from Iran in worsening crisis

Combined agency dispatches

IRAN ON Saturday called a German court ruling implicating Iranian leaders in terrorism as "divine benevolence."

Thursday's verdict is "divine benevolence because it enlightens our public opinion about the false nature of Europe's claims to respect human rights," state radio said.

It denounced the ruling as "political and a publicity stunt" in a campaign against the Islamic Republic.

Iran's ambassador to Germany arrived here Saturday after a Berlin court's ruling blaming Iranian leaders for the murder of exiled dissidents plunged Tehran into its worst diplomatic crisis since 1989.

State-run Tehran Radio said the envoy, Hussein Moussavian, arrived in the Iranian capital Tehran for "consultations."

All 15 European Union (EU) nations except Greece recalled their ambassadors from Tehran, as did Canada, after a German court Thursday found four men guilty of the 1992 slayings of Iranian Kurdish dissidents in Berlin. It said Iran's top leadership ordered the assassinations.

Tehran also ordered four German diplomats to leave, responding in kind to a similar German move against Iran.

Tehran's Farsi-language newspapers, reporting the verdict for the first time Saturday after the Iranian weekend, made no mention of the court's condemnation of Iran's top leaders.

The news was reported in full only in the less-widely read English-language papers.

The official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) said that demonstrators would converge at the German embassy in Tehran Sunday. On Friday, thousands chanted slogans against Germany and burned U.S. and Israeli flags in a march at the embassy.

The demonstrators implied they would overrun the embassy unless Germany apologised to the Iranian government by Monday.

The Tehran protests are a rerun of daily state-run rallies in November, when the Berlin court first implicated Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

and President Hashemi Rafsanjani in the 1992 murders. Protesters then pelted the embassy with rotten tomatoes.

In its final verdict Thursday, the Berlin court said the orders came from Iran's top leaders, but did not name them.

It found Kazem Darabi, an Iranian who worked as a green grocer in Berlin, and a Lebanese man, Abbas Rhyael, guilty of the Sept. 17, 1992, killing of Iranian Kurdish leader Sadiq Sharafkandi and three colleagues in the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin.

Both men were sentenced to life in prison. Two other Lebanese — Yousef Amin and Mohammad Atris — were convicted of being accessories to murder and given jail terms of 11 years and five years and three months respectively.

A fifth defendant, Lebanese Atallah Ayad, was acquitted.

In a speech at Tehran University Friday, Mr. Rafsanjani said the EU action was a "passing storm" similar to the action taken by the Europeans in 1989, when the late revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini called on Muslims to kill British author Salman Rushdie, accusing the Indian-born writer of insulting Islam in his novel "The Satanic Verses."

Khomeini's fatwa, or religious edict, unleashed a storm of protests by the West. EU countries called home their ambassadors and Iran briefly severed diplomatic ties with Britain, which called the action "an incitement to murder."

Mr. Rafsanjani noted Friday that after a few months of protests over the Rushdie affair EU nations returned to business as usual with Iran.

The current crisis is Iran's worst diplomatic fix since then.

The United States, which has long called Iran a "rogue state" and called for its isolation has welcomed the EU action.

Last year, Washington tightened existing sanctions against Iran, banning U.S. companies from trading with Tehran altogether. Europe is oil-rich Iran's only source of advanced Western technology.

Germany and EU members had maintained a "critical dialogue" with Iran, arguing that it was the best way of bringing change in Iran's hardline policies. Germany has said it will "not participate for the foreseeable future" in close ties

with Iran.

After the verdict, Iranian dissidents in Europe and some German lawmakers called for action against Iran, including freezing Iranian credits, an action which would stifle Iranian imports and shake the foundations of Iran's rickety economy.

Meanwhile in Iran, Tehran Radio filled breaks between its regular programmes Saturday with quotes from Mr. Rafsanjani's speech, in which he accused the United States and Israel of influencing the trial.

"Nation swept by wave of anger against Germany," screamed a banner headline in Saturday's Jomhuri Islami daily, which reported protests in several Iranian cities.

The daily Iran News, which is known to be guided by the foreign ministry, called the impasse with Europe "the worst and deepest crisis between Iran and the EU."

"The present crisis, like the previous ones will disappear, but Iran will now be in a better position to go after real friends for future lucrative business and commercial ties," the English-language newspaper said in an editorial.

A leading member of the Iranian-backed Hizbollah called for the expulsion of Germany's ambassador in Lebanon and accused Bonn of seeking confrontation with Tehran, in remarks published on Saturday.

Sheikh Sobhi Tufayli, head of Hizbollah's radical wing, said in a sermon during Friday prayers: "The German and Western presence is not wanted in Lebanon. We demand that the German ambassador leave Beirut."

Sheikh Tufayli also said that before the verdict, Germany had warned its nationals to stay away from the Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs, both strongholds of the Shiite Hizbollah.

"That shows the German authorities were preparing to take up a position towards the Islamic Republic independently from that of the judiciary, in line with the West's negative policies towards Iran," he said.

Hizbollah spearheads anti-Israeli attacks in southern Lebanon, where the Jewish state occupies a border strip.

Ben Baz condemns plan for Iranian Hajj protest

DUBAI (AFP) — The mufti of Saudi Arabia on Saturday condemned as heresy a traditional demonstration held by Iranian pilgrims in Mecca every year, a day after Iran vowed to carry out the protest at this year's Hajj.

"The organisation of demonstrations and processions during the pilgrimage to Mecca to disavow pagans is heresy," Sheikh Abdul Aziz Ben Baz, Saudi Arabia's most senior religious official, told the Arab daily Al Hayat.

"The state must ban these demonstrations as they have no religious basis and they harm pilgrims," the mufti told the London-based Saudi-owned paper.

The official leading the 73,000 Iranian pilgrims to this year's pilgrimage in Mecca, which began on Thursday and is due to culminate next week, said Friday the delegation would hold the disavowal of the pagans ceremony despite repeated Saudi warnings.

Mohammad Mohammadi Rey Shahri told the Iranian news agency IRNA that the demonstration would be held "with all its splendour" on Sunday — the sixth day of the lunar month.

"There is a possibility that the ceremonies will be held either in (Mount) Arafat or Mina," stations on the pilgrimage which are near Mecca, Islam's holiest city, he said.

Since its 1979 Islamic revolution, Tehran has regularly called for pilgrims to organise disavowal-of-the-unbelievers demonstrations in Mecca against the United States and Israel.

Khartoum says charges against Numeiri dropped

KHARTOUM (AP) — Criminal charges against ousted President Gaafar Numeiri have been dropped and he can now return home from exile, Justice Minister Abdul Basit Sabdarat said in remarks published Saturday in the daily Akhbar Al Yom.

Mr. Numeiri seized power in Sudan when he led a May 1969 coup which toppled an elected government. He ruled Sudan for nearly 16 years before he was ousted by a 1985 military coup.

He has since lived in exile in neighbouring Egypt.

During the 12-month military rule which followed Mr. Numeiri's ouster, military leader Marshal Abdul Rahman Sewar Al Dahab filed criminal charges against Mr. Numeiri which included corruption and the

termination of a democratically elected government.

Mr. Sabdarat said he based his decision to allow Mr. Numeiri to return to Sudan on the fact that several of his junta colleagues have had charges against them dropped or had been freed from jail following their conviction of corruption charges.

"After the issuing of this decision, there are no more charges against Numeiri who can now return home if he wishes to do so," Akhbar Al Yom quoted the minister as saying.

Mr. Numeiri said last year that he had rejected an offer by President Omar Al Bashir, in power since he led a 1989 coup, to return home to take a top government position.

SPLA destroys Ugandan rebels' base

KAMPALA (AFP) — Rebels in southern Sudan have destroyed a base belonging to an insurgency fighting the Ugandan regime, Ugandan Defence Minister Amama Mbabazi said Saturday.

The minister told AFP that the base, near the southern Sudanese town of Aru, was attacked by fighters of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) on Wednesday and Thursday.

Mr. Mbabazi said he did not know if the Ugandan Insurgency Group (LRA) leader Joseph Kony was in Aru during the attack.

"These days Kony spends much of his time in Juba," Mr. Mbabazi added. Juba is southern Sudan's main city, which is currently targeted by the SPLA in their latest offensive against government troops in southern Sudan.

Mr. Mbabazi did not give casualty figures, but a report in the state-owned New Vision newspaper said a total of 153 LRA rebels and Sudanese government troops were killed during the fighting. The SPLA captured 210 LRA rebels, the newspaper added.

The mainly Christian and animist SPLA rebels, fighting to free southern Sudan from domination by the Arab Muslim north, are reportedly advancing towards Juba on three fronts.

The LRA has been fighting in northern Uganda during the past decade to overthrow the government of President Yoweri Museveni and replace it with an administration based on the Biblical 10 Commandments.

The LRA is the third Ugandan rebel group to have its bases in southern Sudan destroyed by the SPLA since the Sudanese fighters stepped up their offensive on March 9.

During the first two weeks of the SPLA advance, its forces overran and destroyed bases belonging to the West Nile Bank front and the Ugandan National Rescue Front.

In Asmara, Eritrea, a spokesman for the SPLA said the Sudanese rebels had seized the Red Sea garrison town of Meratti from government troops on Friday and killed two senior military commanders.

Yassir Said Arman, spokesman for the SPLA, said fighters of the opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA) captured the town on Friday. The two army commanders killed during the fighting were leading a convoy of government troops which fell into a rebel ambush. Mr. Arman gave their names as Lieutenant Colonel Mahdi Al Hajj Saleh and Major Khalifa Bedewir.

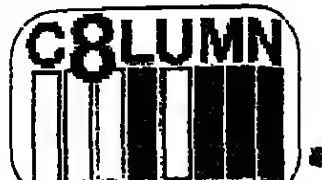
The NDA forces captured three T-55 tanks, six BM Howitzers, 15 Toyota Land Cruiser vehicles and many rifles and machineguns during the fighting, Mr. Arman added.

He gave no details of NDA casualties, but said the rebel forces were advancing towards Tokar and Port Sudan.

The authorities in Khartoum have faced attacks on three separate fronts in the past three months as the rebel alliance tries to topple the regime of President Omar Al Bashir.

Khartoum has alleged that Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda have backed the rebels, but the three countries have repeatedly denied involvement in the conflict.

Qatar has reportedly given Sudan around \$2.8 million collected by a Qatari committee for the Sudanese people, the official Qatari News Agency said Saturday.



Thornton sued

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — The wife of U.S. actor-director Billy Bob Thornton has sued him for divorce just three weeks after he won an Oscar for the screenplay of his acclaimed movie "Sling Blade." Pietra Dawn, who was on Thornton's arm at the March 24 Oscar ceremonies, filed for divorce here Friday citing irreconcilable differences. The couple married Feb. 16, 1993, and separated last Tuesday, according to a press statement.

Estefan sings to 100,000 in S. Africa

NEW YORK (AFP) — U.S. pop star Gloria Estefan completed her first tour of South Africa last week, playing to more than 100,000 fans in sold-out concerts in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. Estefan, whose signature is her Spanish-language lyrics, said she was thrilled by the response of South African fans. "Our music has always been a fusion of Afro-Cuban rhythms, and to have the opportunity to perform it live in the country where it originated has been the thrill of a lifetime," Estefan said, adding, "not to mention seeing those people doing the 'Conga'." Estefan's "evolution world tour" began in South Africa and goes to Australia and Japan, winding up in Honolulu May 3.

Jailed Nigerian journalist wins prize

NEW YORK (AFP) — A Nigerian journalist jailed for criticising his country's military and a Turkish editor sentenced to prison for her book on the Armenian genocide have won the Pen Club's Barbara Goldsmith Prize for Literary Freedom. Goldwin Agbroko, editor of the Nigerian newspaper "This Week," was arrested at his office by state security officials on Dec. 17, the Pen Club, an international association sponsoring freedom of expression, said in a statement Friday. Agbroko remains in prison where he is not allowed visitors except for a single meeting with his wife, the association said. Ayse Nur Zarakolu, who founded a committee for freedom of publication in Turkey where she also runs a publishing house, was sentenced in 1995 to two years in prison for publishing a book about the 1915 mass killing of millions of Armenians by the Turkish army. While she hasn't begun serving this term, she was imprisoned last fall for putting out a book on Kurdish dissidents, the association said.

Bank robber's bloody shirt to be auctioned

SAN FRANCISCO (AFP) — The blood-stained and bullet-ridden shirt of legendary depression-era bank robber Clyde Barrow will be sold at auction here Monday with the opening bid set at \$35,000. The Butterfield and Butterfield auction house said. Barrow's sister, Mary Barrow, 78, is putting up for sale 10 lots of the robber's effects including a watch, a revolver and a letter he wrote in 1931 to his mother. They are expected to fetch between \$53,000 and \$70,000. Barrow and his partner, Bonnie Parker, from Dallas, Texas, acquired notoriety and folk-hero status in the 1930s, robbing a dozen banks and killing more than 15 people. They were shot to death on a back country road in a trap set by the police, an episode recreated in the classic 1960s film "Bonnie and Clyde," which starred Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty.